

## Interview with Earl Wilson

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project  
Information Series

EARL WILSON

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Background Before USIA

*Q: I want to start out, Earl, by asking you to give us a short summary of where you're coming from, what you did before you got into the Agency, and a little bit about your war experiences, just enough so that we know what your background was. When you first came with the Agency, what brought you into it? Will you pick it up from there?*

WILSON: I was born the second of October 1917 in Washington, D.C., which makes me 71 as of a few weeks ago. I was born at 1614 G Street, Southeast, a half a block from Congressional Cemetery, which I see by the papers is now regarded as the first official cemetery, very historic. I used to play there. That's 16 blocks from the Capitol. Capitol Hill seems to get bigger every year. I was born in a rowhouse in Southeast Washington. Now I can say I was born in a townhouse on Capitol Hill.

I went to Eastern High School and worked in a variety of jobs. Then finally, I started at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service at night. I had been there about a year, I guess, when I married, at the age of 20, Lorane Andrews, 19, whose grandfather, Guinn Williams, was a congressman from Texas. Her mother had divorced, and Lorane came

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here with her mother to live. Lorane was working at Hecht's. That's where we met. I was working at my first job after high school as kind of office boy-stenographer for Charles Dulcan, vice president of Hecht's, one of the highest paid men in Washington.

Next, I got a job at the St. Elizabeth's Hospital as an attendant. I wanted to be a writer. I thought I would learn a lot about people there. I certainly did. In the six or seven months I worked there I saw every conceivable kind of mental illness.

I was still going to Georgetown at night. After three years, I knew I wanted to be a foreign correspondent or a writer of some sort, and go abroad. But I didn't want to study journalism. I thought the Foreign Service course would be more useful.

Then I decided my life was slipping away. I really wasn't getting very far with this. So I went to apply for a job at the Washington Post and the other newspapers. After a year of persistence, I finally was hired as a copy boy at the Post for \$15 a week. My wife worked, and somehow we managed to live. I'd been at the Post about a year, and had worked my way up as chief copy boy, cub reporter, then a reporter. It turned out I had talent as a feature writer.

## World War II

I had also been enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve at the age of 15, while I was in high school, by a deputy principal who was a Marine Corps Reserve officer. When I married, I got out of the Marine Corps Reserve about a year before the war began. I did have seven years in, had participated in weekly drills and summer camps. When the war broke out, I went to Capitol Hill, trying to get in to hear the declaration of war. I tried to get in the Marines immediately, thought about being a pilot, but the old story, my eyes weren't up to it.

Somebody told me the Marines were trying to get reporters for some kind of a combat correspondent thing. I went over there. I was what they were looking for, a newspaper

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reporter and, in addition, I had seven years experience in the Marine Corps, knew what they were about. They made me a second lieutenant on the spot.

I wanted desperately to get abroad. Within a matter of a month or six weeks, I was at Pearl Harbor. The Marine general in charge there of the area had never heard of public relations or combat correspondents. He said, "You can do that on your own time. You're going to take over the Headquarters and Service company." We had three islands, Palmira, Johnson, and Midway. We called them the "wheel of joy." I had to see about men coming and going. Anyhow, that's another story I won't get into.

I was in four campaigns, including Tarawa, and wrote a book about it called Betio Beachhead. All this is on an oral history tape at the Marine Corps Historical Center Museum at the Navy Yard in Washington. If anybody's interested, they can look into that.

When the war was over, the general in charge of public information asked me to go to China and take over North China public information for Marine aviation. I had always been fascinated with China, I agreed, even though I had more points to get out than you could shake a stick out. My wife let me go. For six months I learned a lot about China. Fortunately, I had a roommate who was a Chinese language officer, a missionary kid, born, raised, educated in China, who showed me everything.

Then I came back to the Post. I applied to the publisher, Eugene Meyer, told him I wanted to be a foreign correspondent, wanted to go to China. He hemmed and hawed and finally said he couldn't afford that. So I went back to being a feature writer.

### Joining USIA Forerunner

After about a year, I was having lunch at the Press Club with an old Marine buddy, John Thomason, son of the famous Marine Corps writer and artist, Colonel John Thomason. He said he was going to Calcutta. I said, "My God, what's up?"

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He said, "The State Department is hiring people with newspaper experience to go overseas."

Well, I hustled over there. I thought about going to Latin America because I had been specializing in Latin America at Georgetown.

I forgot to mention that on the newspaper, I got a four-year scholarship to G.W. I went to G.W. for over a year. When the war broke out, I had to quit. So although I had five years of college, I didn't have a degree. Georgetown claims I'm an alumnus.

So I went over. They said, "We've got an opening in Shanghai."Q: What year was that when you got the job with USIA or its predecessor?

WILSON: They took a reasonably long time for security clearance in those days. I actually went aboard around March of 1947. The training was very, very rudimentary at that time. Headquarters was the old building at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue. We were a part of State. I think it was called the Office of International Information and Cultural Affairs. Everybody knows the State Department didn't really want this propaganda organization attached to it. OWI had folded.

For part of the training I went to an old red-brick building next to the Bureau of Printing on 14th Street where the OWI photo files were left. That building has since disappeared. I think it's where the Holocaust Museum is to be located. They had literally thousands upon thousands of OWI negatives in file cases, and two little old ladies creeping about trying to find things. Harry Casler, who had been photo editor in New York on one of the papers, was in charge.

In a building by State, various ambassadors and Foreign Service officers gave us talks on one thing or the other. It was totally useless. We got a little exposure to the different branches of what would become the Agency. We soon left.

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### Bound For Shanghai

To get to Shanghai, my wife and I had to go to Mobile and catch a freighter. We were both in our late twenties, married nine years, had our two little girls, April and Ronby, with us. The freighter was delayed and delayed before we finally boarded her. It had not been converted from wartime uses. Our cabin was simply a large, bare, steel-walled area. They used to have a lot of bunks, but had thrown out all but four. We used our trunk for a table. I think we got a chair from someplace. My wife had never been abroad before.

We set sail, and the third night out, when we were laying off Panama, there was a murder on the ship. We were on the Atlantic side of the Panama Canal. Someone, in the early hours stepped up on a steam pipe, reached through a port hole, stabbed our cabin steward. He was a very nice young man. He was stabbed with such force it ripped part of the bunk. The guy fell off of his bunk. The second mate, on duty on the bridge, just happened to come below, saw his buddy, blood gushing from his body. He ran up and blew SOS on the steam whistle. I heard this in the middle of the night. I jumped up, ran out on deck to see what the heck was going on. From my own wartime experience, I thought we were on fire, a collision course or something, but I didn't see anything. It wasn't 'til morning, when we went for breakfast. We found the police aboard. They took off a suspect screaming and cursing, another one of the stewards.

We went through the canal. The newspaper's banner headlines called us the "murder ship," said it was the most sensational crime to have happened there. While we were on deck trying to look at the canal, people were on the locks, looking at the "murder ship." We got to the other side. The crew weren't convinced the murderer had been taken off. They slept in groups on the deck at night, with one of them standing guard with a bat or pan or something. It wasn't a very happy time.

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Then, finally, the inquest was over, and we set sail. Incidentally, that suspect was later released. They never did find out who did it because it was circumstantial evidence. I'm pretty sure he was the one.

We sailed across the Pacific without any stops, except Hawaii, but we couldn't get off the ship. I was acting purser on the ship because the captain, who was like an old farmer, didn't have one, and I volunteered to help him with his paperwork. It let me know what was going on on the ship. Actually, the trip in some ways turned out to be quite nice. The seamen were more than kind to our children. They made them a swing, a pond with the fire hose, and I made a six-foot high kite which we flew from the stern.

Everything was going along pretty good until we got to the China Sea. There we hit a typhoon. Our ship almost went over. Some did. In the middle of it, our daughter, April, had a weird high fever. My wife was worried sick. I wanted to see if the ship could head to Japan.

*Q: I suppose they didn't have any doctor on board.*

WILSON: No doctor. They had 12 passengers, all missionaries except us and one other guy, a young banker. In the evenings, we would sit on the port side of the boat deck, drinking rum and Coke, singing folk songs or whatever. They were on the other side with their Bibles and dominoes.

We had that terrible typhoon, and fortunately, April got better. Lorane, like all good mothers, had built-in medical instincts, I guess.

### Shanghai Arrival

We arrived in Shanghai about June of 1947. Brad Conners was in charge. Tommy Linthicum met us at the dock. He was the administrative officer. He's now out in San Diego, where I saw him last year. He took us to what was to be our temporary quarters,

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the flat of a man who on home leave. It was in Hamilton House, right in the heart of Shanghai, across the street from a bank building where our consulate general was located. The USIS office was on the second floor of Hamilton House. In Washington we were called the U.S. International Communications Agency. There were a lot of name changes before we got to the U.S. Information Agency. But always USIS abroad.

Our new flat was on the sixth floor. My wife, when she saw this dingy, crummy apartment—compared to the nice clean one in Bethesda we had, with a nice park outside, and here, no place for the children to play, she began to slowly go into culture shock.

USIS was on the second floor. I went in to report to Brad Conners. He told me he had some bad news. Congress had made a very severe budget cut. He had to close five branch offices, and had to lay off 75% of the local staff throughout the country. Brad was quite an interesting person. He had a photographic memory, absolutely, remembered every cable he ever read. Partly as a result of that, he became very good at picking people, and their brains, he went right to the top. Unfortunately, he died young of lung cancer. I never saw him without a cigarette in his mouth. He said I was going to be in charge of motion pictures and all the audio-visual stuff.

The news of the closing of so much of USIS, brought a flood of telegrams, letters, and phone calls of protest. Here I'm referring to notes. A leading newspaper, the Chungking Daily, said, "USIS is our only source of news from America. It is essential to the maintenance of Sino-American relations." The English-language Shanghai Evening Post said the budget slash was a crying shame. And so on. Tilman Durdin, a very respected foreign correspondent of The New York Times, wrote, "The United States is fighting an uphill battle to make itself understood and to win good will in China in face of bitterly critical propaganda of the Communists. The U.S. Information Service has been contributing much to the American cause at a critical juncture in U.S. relations with China."

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I was beginning to get a little bit of a feeling for what was going on. At the end of the war, of course, our attention was focused on the enemy, on Japan, and I had no contact with China. Then, when I went to China, my eyes began to open a little bit. First of all, there were a million Japanese in north China. Naturally, we thought we were going to have a lot of trouble. But when the Emperor spoke, there were absolutely no difficulties whatever. As a matter of fact, they gave some of them their rifles back and put them to guard different places.

But the Communists were something else. Our aircraft were flying under very difficult conditions weather-wise with poor communications. When a pilot would go down, we usually knew where he was. We had this tremendous combat-ready force, ready to send out to get him, pick him up.

*Q: Is this while you were still in the Marines?*

WILSON: Yes. I'm just giving a little insight of my learning something about the Communists. To "bring the boys home" was a demand from our citizens. Ranks were being thinned. If a Marine lieutenant platoon leader got out to the village and said to the head man, "Okay, bring out Captain So-and-so, we know you've got him." The man would just look blank. Someone would say, "If you don't bring him out in five minutes, we'll shell the village." They knew perfectly well these Americans weren't going to do anything like that. As a consequence, you had to bargain. Chinese language officers had to get in there, gold would be exchanged and things like that. So the lesson I was learning was that military force, which we've learned in many conflicts since, doesn't necessarily solve the problem.

Then in the city of Tientsin, where I was based, one or two movie theaters were showing, I suddenly realized, Russian films in Chinese about how they won the war and defeated Nazi Germany. The few American films were old films. I suddenly realized quite a propaganda thing was under way.



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I had met some of the White Russians. They were fun people, as a rule. Then I went to a celebration of a Red Russia holiday at a big auditorium to see what was going on. They had a ballet, written to show how they won the war. They had a cabled message from Stalin.

With USIS a few years later, I realized, of course, that China was a very large country with about 500 million people. It was poor, had been ravaged by war, had virtually no transportation system, and, of course, they were having a civil war with the Communists. The U.S. was under fire in a skilled manner with the Communists attacking us in every way. It was difficult for people to get much information about the United States.

Despite closing five offices, we still had branch offices in Nanking, Peiping, Mukden, Chungking, Hangzhou, Canton, and Taipei. With my arrival, we had 13 Americans.

### USIS Program in China

I want to comment a little bit about our USIS program at that time and with that small number of American officers and local staff, what we tried to do.

First of all, news. The Associated Press and the United Press were business organizations, and business was bad in much of the world. They were servicing less than 30% of the estimated 600 daily newspapers in China. That's AP. UP reached about 70%. Those papers served directly the American news services were concentrated in the Shanghai-Nanking area, about like Washington, D.C., and New York. In other words, only about 10% of the Chinese daily press was receiving news directly from American wire services. Of course, the Kuomintang Central News Agency subscribed to AP, but through a filter, which was quite a filter. We were trying to take up the slack.

### Wireless File

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In Shanghai we received from Washington the daily wireless file. It ran about 3,500 words daily. John Henderson was our number two man, Brad's deputy. Mary Barrett, who later married New York Times foreign correspondent Walter Sullivan, was handling the press and the wireless file. That would come in, be translated into Chinese, then put it into what was called the Chinese number code using Morse signals and transmitted to our branches for decoding, mimeographing, and distribution. About 70% of our material was printed in Chinese newspapers and read by a daily audience of an estimated 25 million Chinese. Even in Shanghai, where AP, UP, Chinese Central News, Reuters, Agence France Presse, Tass, were all available, about 60% of our stuff was published in the newspapers.

*Q: I suppose the foreign news services weren't giving much about the United States, but to some extent, I would think AP and UP would, where they serviced the papers.*

WILSON: It's interesting. I haven't ever read or made a study of this, but I'm sure somebody has. Particularly in those days, AP and UP were servicing a lot of very bad news about the United States, because they thought that was what different markets wanted.

*Q: Can you give an example of what you say was bad news?*

WILSON: Race relations, anything with race relations, murders, anything about the poor. Just any negative story that you could think of. At one time I thought about clipping a batch to show to Congress, but then I said, "To hell with it."

On the radio, Radio Moscow came in loud and clear to China, and the Chinese Communists made daily broadcasts from up in the north. VOA was quite weak by comparison. It went over our heads directly to the Chinese. We didn't have too much to do with VOA, but we backed it up with loans of phonograph records to radio stations. These were mostly old OWI (Office of War Information) records. OWI had been well financed

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during the war. We inherited a lot of their stuff. I had stacks of OWI radio records, some beautiful Metropolitan Opera, things like that.

### Library Program

Margaret Thompson, who had been with the Red Cross in China, was in charge of our libraries. In Shanghai, fourth largest city in the world, there was only one free library, and that was ours. It was on the second floor of Hamilton House, where we had American books and magazines available for free loan. Of course, we had libraries in various branch posts. She was our only trained librarian. Also, we had a grant of \$100,000 to buy books for Chinese libraries and universities. That was made possible by a grant from the American Library Association.

*Q: I presume these were all in English.*

WILSON: I'm not sure. I wasn't much involved with that program. But probably.

The first Fulbright Agreement was signed with China, the first in the world. They had \$20 million earmarked from the sale of surplus war equipment to China to send American teachers and students to that country, and Chinese to our country. Bud Harris in Nanking handled that program. The Soviets had an exchange program, and they took hundreds of Chinese students and teachers to Moscow. And the Chinese Communists took a great many up to their capital at Yen-an for training.

### Audio-Visual Programs

I was to be in charge of all the audio-visual programs and USIS publications. Brad said, "Don't expect much help from Washington," and that was true. We got very, very little material from Washington, practically no guidance. The way the thing was set up, our embassy was in Nanking, our USIS headquarters in Shanghai. Brad had to travel to Nanking once a week and spend a night. That was very demanding on him. Really, I got

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practically no guidance whatever from Brad or anybody else, just on my own, with very little out of Washington.

*Q: What month was this that you're talking about in 1947? What I'm trying to do is to coordinate this with the time that the Smith-Mundt Act was passed, which finally gave us the authority to establish a full-fledged what became U.S. Information and Education Program under State.*

WILSON: The time I'm talking about would be the summer and fall, I think, of 1947, more or less.

*Q: I think the Smith-Mundt Act was enacted in '48, so they were probably pretty badly coordinated in Washington until they got that authority.*

WILSON: Yes. What I'm talking about is sort of a general period from '47 to '48. In my area of responsibility we were largely living off the fat of OWI. When the Japanese surrendered, a lot of the OWI World War II material that had been in Chungking came down the Yangtze to Shanghai.

My office in Hamilton House was one large gloomy room. I shared it with ten Chinese artists, writers, translators, and clerks, our desks all jammed together. There was a lot of jabbering in Chinese which I didn't understand. But little by little, I began to comprehend, almost by osmosis, a lot of what was being said.

On the motion picture side, we were operating with OWI films of Americana in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Turkic. We reached about 3 million people a month through these films. I had one American officer working for me, Lorin Reeder. He was a big specimen, like Joe Palooka, very good natured, hands were like hams, and quite a character. He had come over in World War II to drop in a parachute, he thought—he'd been a bricklayer or something as a civilian—but instead, he wound up in OWI as a printer technician photographer. Joining USIS, he ran our photo lab and was in charge of printing. Our photo

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lab was a converted closet, and once again we had a great many negatives of Americana from OWI.

One reason I'm going into this is it was the beginning of the later development of the regional production center in Manila, and from that, the various ones in other parts of the world. We also had a Chinese newsletter, made up of reprints in Chinese of American magazine articles. The press section put this out periodically, just pages of type, no illustrations. I thought it very unappealing, so I brightened it up, gave it a cover, made it like a magazine with line drawings and so on. We began to reach 13,000 schools, universities, selected groups, and 75% of that material was reprinted. We did get a nice response to this from Washington. They congratulated us on the Chinese magazine. This also was a sort of precursor to a number of magazines that came out later in the Far East.

### Artists

I'll just mention one other thing. Ever since I was young, I've always painted. I loved to draw. That has made me interested in artists. In all my posts, I usually wound up knowing a lot of them. In Shanghai, there was a restaurant called Sun Ya. In the back room, the owner maintained a salon for writers and artists, mainly artists. I was invited to join this group, it turned out not because I was an artist so much, but because he wanted my help to do a cookbook. I didn't have time to get into that, but I enjoyed meeting these artists.

One was Chin San-long, called the "father of Chinese photography." He studied classical Chinese painting, but decided he couldn't paint good enough. So he got one of those early old cameras with the glass plates. He would make three shots, put them together in the dark room. The end product looked like a Chinese classical painting. He might have the mist of the mountains in the background, and in the middle ground, maybe a bird sitting on a branch of a tree, and in the foreground, perhaps some bushes or whatever. Beautiful stuff.

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I sent a bunch of his paintings to New York, to a magazine called Coronet, no longer published. they ran his photos in the entire center section, called it "Eternal China." Years later, after the Communists took over, he took a trip to the U.S. and to Europe. We'd become friends. I told him to try to capture the U.S. the way he'd captured China, and he did. This man, incidentally, had won prizes all over the world for his work in salon photography. He gave me a photograph he made of the Statue of Liberty. It's very interesting, like a Chinese painting. It has the fog, the sun dimly seen. The statue was like the mountains.

### Art Exhibits

I want to say another thing about art. You know, UNESCO held its first art exhibit in Paris right after the war. Harry Truman was President at this time. These paintings had been selected by museum directors in the U.S. It turned out they were all abstracts. The Europeans wanted very much to see what American artists had been doing during the war. I think it was Look magazine that ran photos of some of these abstracts, very derisive, "This is what foreigners are being shown as American art," they said. It created quite a furor in Congress. Harry Truman ducked it. He said, in a press conference, he liked "ham-and-eggs" art. The consequence of all this was the word "art" became a four-letter word in the Agency. There was no way they were going to get involved with this; it would cut the throat of their budget.

The one thing I had been doing in my so-called training in Washington over in that old photographic section was to write captions for an art exhibit. The exhibit was of traditional American paintings, black and white photographs, you know, things like John Steuart Curry or [Edward] Hopper or [Thomas Hart] Benton or Winslow Homer, Norman Rockwell, Grandma Moses, that type of thing. So I'd written these captions. With the Paris uproar, it was stored away.

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When I got to Shanghai, I began to go to art exhibits. Boy! They had more art exhibits than you could think of. I wrote back to a friend in the Agency, asked him to get that art exhibit I'd worked on, stuck away somewhere, and send it to me. He did.

In our library, I planned to have what turned out to be the first American art exhibit after the war in China. We pushed back files, book stacks, and things in the library and made a makeshift exhibit hall. We had recorded music playing in the background. With our \$25 representation fund we got some cookies and tea. We sent out invitations to the elite—the teachers, artists, writers, and so on—and they came. Almost everyone we sent an invitation to came, and they were fascinated, looking at these black and white photographs which we had framed and matted.

The interesting thing is, earlier in Canton, a mob, Communist-led, had burned down the British consulate. The consul escaped with his life by hiding under a bed. This unrest then surged up to Shanghai. Barbed wire was all around the entrance to our consulate. Chinese Nationalist troops with helmets and machine guns were on guard. Crowds were in the street. I'll never forget, there I was, standing, talking with our guests to our art exhibit who were drinking our tea, eating our cookies, looking at our pictures, while looking out a window, I could see the street mobs. One team was writing with tar on the wall of the Cathay Hotel, "Get out filthy American beasts."

*Q: You spoke of the riots in Canton, but you are still talking about the exhibit being in Shanghai, aren't you?*

WILSON: That's right. But I mean, the Communists could play these things like a piano, up and down.

A bit later, a young student came to my office and said they were having an international art exhibit sponsored by university students. Would the U.S. participate? He told me the Russians had agreed, the French, the British, and so on. Without stopping to think how, I

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said, "Sure." Then I started looking for paintings at the Agency, as I said, art was a four-letter word. Nothing there. First of all, I contacted all of our branch posts.

By the way, a marvelous thing we had left over from the war was a communications system. We, the USIS, had this. One way old Brad could throw his weight around a little bit is that he could do favors for people by communicating. I'm talking about legally within the consulate. Looking for paintings, I tried the American Club, the American School, and the American bookstore. I got absolutely nowhere.

I tried the other Far East posts, Manila, Tokyo and so on. Tokyo, because of the occupation, had it all. They sent me, on loan, a beautiful set of color prints, just what the doctor ordered. We put those up. The Russians had heroic-size statues, large paintings of Lenin and all the rest. The British and the French had nice exhibits, but ours, I thought, was better.

After that, I had to send that exhibit back to Tokyo. But my black and white exhibit began to travel in China from post to post. Hundreds of thousands of people saw it. I was happy about that. I claimed that we had the first art exhibit in China and the last for a generation, because when China went down the drain, it wasn't until later, 25, 28 years later, that the Agency could hold another there.

*Q: I'd just like to make one comment and ask you what your reaction is. From what you have said, I gather that you felt the art that you had, even though it was limited, got you "in" with a great many very important people in China at that time. It wasn't only the artists, but it was probably people of fairly high standing in various fields of business and government and so forth. Is that a correct assumption?*

WILSON: Oh, absolutely. I found that in post after post, art was a conduit to all kinds of influential people.



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*Q: The reason I say this is because I recently interviewed Alan Fisher. Alan was a very talented man. He was an artist in painting and in music and in several other fields. Although he was generally apolitical, he made all sorts of contacts among high Brazilian people, particularly, where he spent the larger part of his USIS career. He and I felt that he had made an impact which many other people didn't, with ordinary USIS type of programs. He had everybody, from governors and presidents of the country, as his personal contacts and knew them on a first-name basis. I don't think you can equal that kind of an approach and that kind of an impact, as far as American efforts informationally abroad are concerned.*

USIS Poster Program: Its Effectiveness

WILSON: Yes, I would agree.

I want to turn to another subject. During the war, OWI sent to Chungking, among other things, high-speed Webb leaflet presses. One of these later came to USIS in Shanghai. I found, despite what we were printing with it, we had a lot of press capacity left over. We also had tons of excess OWI paper. We had all these Americana negatives. So the thought occurred to me, why not make paper shows, posters, based on this material, with captions in English and Chinese, see if I could get some relevancy to Chinese problems. I began to produce these poster exhibits just a few months after I arrived.

The first exhibit was about American elections and voting in a democracy. The Chinese angle was, China had adopted its first Constitution in 5,000 years. They were about to hold their first national election. So I got an OWI booklet, and we copied the excellent drawings and diagrams on the American system. The posters were a great success. We began to reach more millions of people. These posters were being put up all over the country.

We were going along merrily with this, and I was quite happy about it, when I picked up Time magazine one day, and to my astonishment, there was in a box, was a story,

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datelined Lukden, very critical of my posters. It was called "The Glory of Plumbing," and said, "In that bleak and cheerless place up there," meaning a Nationalist prisoner of war camp where the writer happened to go and see posters on a wall, they "looked like dark blossoms on the snow," all in good Time magazine style prose. The whole point of the story was the ineffectiveness of telling hard-core Communist POWs about American plumbing.

I wrote a letter to Time. I'd like to summarize it here. I said, "I suggest the story entitled 'Glory of Plumbing' should have been called 'The Glory of Sewage Disposal,' for such was the subject matter. In disease-ridden China, few people argue with the fact that proper sanitation would be a tremendous step forward. Our exhibit tried to tell some of the basic facts of sewage disposal as practiced in the U.S. It even contained a U.S. Public Health Service plan for a cheap, sanitary outdoor toilet, as well as photographs of sewage disposal plants in large towns and cities. In brief, it offered the Chinese work for the present and plans for the future. Its usefulness can be measured by the fact that from public health groups, hospitals, universities, and libraries in every part of China we have received hundreds of letters of praise and enthusiasm, wanting more of this type of thing. It wasn't intended for POWs, for God's sake."

I mentioned the American ballot box, our first poster exhibit. I said, "In Mukden, the very area from which your story was datelined, and which you call one of the world's most important cities, 10 million Chinese saw our voting posters there, just for an example." I said, "Our job, as outlined by the President, is to present a full and a fair picture of America, and we're trying to do that through this and other means." I said, "In this we include in Mukden, among other Chinese cities, the opportunity for anyone to go into our library and get free loan of books and magazines, including your own." Well, I blew off steam.

I sent my letter through the State Department. It never appeared in Time. I doubt if they forwarded it.

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Another little aspect of this. Brad called me to his office one day to meet a fellow named J. Hall Paxton, who was going to Tihwa in Sinkiang province as consul. Paxton, incidentally, later made a very dramatic escape from there by going through Nepal, walking out, to get away from the Communists.

His deputy, Doug McKiernan, months later, tried to do the same thing. Unfortunately, he was shot and killed by Tibetan border guards.

Paxton told me that day he wanted very much to do USIS work out there in that remote part of China, but language was a problem because most of the 5 million Muslim inhabitants spoke Turkic. I said, "No problem." We found a Turkic guy living in Shanghai, hired him to translate. So we began having trilingual captions, Chinese, English, and Turkic for this far Western province.

Not long after Paxton arrived at his post, cholera broke out. I received an urgent cable from him. The authorities wanted very much to spread word about immunization to the populace. He wanted to know if I could furnish him with posters. There was only one plane a month from Shanghai that went there. We had 48 hours. One of my Chinese staff knew a Chinese Public Health doctor. We got him to the office, huddled with him over the desk with an artist and Turkic translator. We soon had a dramatic poster urging inoculation against cholera. Bundles of these posters were rushed to the airport just in time for the last flight in the winter to be canceled. So we struck out on that.

But that gave birth to something else. This doctor was Director of the Anti-Tuberculosis Coordinating Committee for China. He asked if we could do an anti-spitting TB poster for him. I figured I owed him something, so we designed a "don't spit" poster. This guy got those posters plastered all over Shanghai, even on the back of rickshaws and the sides of streetcars.

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The demand was so great, we could have spent the next six months printing nothing but those posters. That came to an abrupt halt, because in Nanking the Minister of Health had complained bitterly about this to Brad. He was losing face. We had to stop that. But I claim it's another first. AID later began to do this kind of poster around the world.

One last bit about that period in Tihwa. The New York Times correspondent Walter Sullivan wrote from there an article favorable to USIS. He wrote this, summarized: "In the heart of Central Asia, in the great hinterland that lies between India, Tibet, and Russia, the United States Information Service is at work." He said posters and movies were the backbone of our program and that daily, a mobile film unit would leave Tihwa to screen films in one of the 28 schools of the provincial capital. He said 832 schools were on the poster mailing list. Many of these posters and other things were carried by caravan of donkeys.

Paxton and his wife would drive to remote areas, and the word somehow would get out about our movies. In the loneliest areas, a crowd of 100 would assemble in a few hours, riding in on horseback, to see a little bit of America. He did say it was unfortunate our films were inferior to the excellent Russian documentaries being shown. They invited audiences of Chinese officials in the larger cities. Of course, there were no American commercial films within 1,000 miles. He said that Russia was very much ahead in the radio field, that VOA was weak. It was nice to hear something about our efforts.

Also, I was pleased by now—this is 1948—to know that our posters were reaching all over China from Manchuria in the north to Hainan island in the south, and out to Central Asia and the borders of Russia.

I experimented, incidentally, with two other posts. One was Manila, where Hal Goodwin was, and printed some posters for him down there, and also with Saigon. So those germs were in the back of my mind about RPC when we get to that later.

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### Visit to a University

I want to mention a couple of things, too, on the family side. One young officer, leaving, gave my oldest girl, April, a little Tibetan poodle. She would take him to the parking lot below for a walk. One day, I got a call from my wife. I was on the second floor of Hamilton House. I ran up to our flat on the sixth floor. The dog had been run over, but he hadn't just been run over. April had him down there off the leash. The cab that ran over him backed up to make sure he had run over him properly, and ran over him a couple of times. The only place our children had to play was a little yard of a church where you had to bribe the guard to open the barbed wire gates and let them in.

I want to mention a trip I took Lorane on and our librarian. We went to Soochow, about 90 miles from Shanghai, called the "Venice of China" because of its canals. We were going to take a lot of books out there to present to the university library. We took a big vehicle, and we had to go through a checkpoint on the road because the Communists had the road at night pretty much. We went along, and we got to the Methodist university, a very pleasant-looking place with a lot of missionaries living a pretty nice life, with nice living quarters, servants, food and all the rest of it.

We had presented the books, were dining with the president, when an urgent message came. Someone had stolen the chop he used for the tickets being given out for the movie we were to show that night in the auditorium. We got up from the table, went down to the auditorium where this film was to be shown. It was almost a riot, students all over the place, angry, demanding to get into the place. I told them to relax, we would give a second showing if they would calm down.

We went into the auditorium, and thank God there wasn't a fire official there. The place was so densely packed, you could barely move. I had told the projectionist to show a film about the United Nations, as it was United Nations Day. We sat with the president. The projectionist was up in the balcony. When the film came on, I realized he had put

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the second reel on first, but these people were so interested, it didn't seem to make any difference. Actually, a part of it was the Boston Symphony Orchestra led by Toscanini, playing the Hymn of the United Nations. These students were starved to see anything. How much of it penetrated their brain, I don't know.

The next day we went up on a nearby hill, Tiger Mountain, to a temple, outside of which we had a lunch. With us was a professor from the college. He was the husband of a Chinese lady who had been on our freighter. She had graduated from Columbia University with a Ph.D., and was involved in a project to try to reach the peasant women of China. They were working in separate places. This guy, who spoke excellent English, told us his wife was pregnant. I've forgotten how the topic came up, but he was very angry, very emotional, "I'll never let him be a teacher." I remember that on the ship, this lady had told us her husband's salary as a professor was the equivalent of about \$15 a month. That's less than we paid our cook.

### Branch Post Visits

One thing very interesting about that period in China was aviation. Of course, Chennault formed the Flying Tigers, after World War II, CAT. A lot of American pilots stayed in China to fly with Chinese airlines. I knew many of these pilots. As a matter of fact, after our wives were evacuated, one of these pilots lived with me. They flew literally everything you can think of around the country—animals, or you name it, steel ingots, whatever. It's a piece of aviation history that has very few counterparts.

I progressively visited our branch posts. I'll tell you a few sentences about each one. The first was over in what was then called Formosa, now Taiwan, the Republic of China. Dick Conlin was there. He lived in Taipei in a Japanese-style house on Grass Mountain. There were very few tourists. The Japanese had occupied the place for years. It had a very distinct Japanese feel. Of course, Nationalists, after the war, when they took it over, had mistreated a lot of the people. They were not liked at all.

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I went to Canton, but when I went there on a military plane, it was covered with fog, so we landed at Hong Kong, my first visit. No place to stay, but one of my pilot friends put me up in the crew's quarters. Hong Kong was a very small British outpost, indeed, at that point.

*Q: What year was that, Earl?*

WILSON: That would be about '48. The next day, the wake-up person didn't call me. I grabbed a cab. My plane was at the end of the runway with the prop turning over. I told the guard at the gate I was a diplomatic courier. They let the cab in. We drove out on the runway and chased the plane. I got on, and we went over to Canton, 30 minutes away, where Elmer Newton, a very dignified guy, was waiting to meet me. I was a little embarrassed, because I hadn't shaved or anything. Canton is where one of the first bad incidents with the Communists had happened, burning of the British consulate.

I went to Nanking. Our branch public affairs officer there was Joe Bennett, a longtime student of China. Then I went on to Hangzhou, where our office was being run by Marian Jenkins, who had married an oil man and whose job now was in Hangzhou. She continued to be our branch PAO there. Then I went to Chungking where the BPAO was Art Hopkins, a missionary child. The military hired a lot of these people because of their language ability, and then USIS hired a lot of them after the war. One of my recommendations, when I finally got back away from the Communists, was to recommend to the Agency they stop hiring people on the basis of language but also look at what their abilities are, because sometimes they can just communicate their stupidity more fluently. But I don't mean this about Art. It just brought to mind that he was a language guy, and he lived up on a mountain in a palace that was falling apart. It had been built for Chiang Kai-shek at one time. He and I played tennis. The mayor there was a tennis nut, had 13 concubines, and they said he married them because of their tennis ability. Art and I were playing tennis, and the mayor showed up. He sicced some of his wives on us, and we played practically all afternoon. We were exhausted.

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Finally, I went over to Kunming in West China, where one of the consuls was doing our work for us as they were in other places. His wife, incidentally, had been quietly helping in a leper colony there. They were leaving. A lot of these lepers scraped their pennies together to put an ad in the local paper thanking her. I thought that was very nice.

### Communists in the Universities

I'll give an example of how the Communists were operating. Their cells in the universities and the schools were a very important part of their apparatus. Students held innumerable strikes and demonstrations, demanding the Nationalist government to stop fighting the Communists, for example. But in 1948, they shifted their line and began to demonstrate against American imperialism, alleging that we were rearming Japan for re-conquest of China. This propaganda campaign started one night at the American School, where my daughter, April, was a student. We went there for a program depicting the birth of the United Nations. The school had 50 nationalities, so they had a lot of native costumes. Just as the program started, a grotesque figure suddenly appeared on the stage as Uncle Sam, wearing a suit covered with dollar signs. Then another figure came on the stage dressed in a baggy Japanese Army officer's uniform, carrying a large bag covered with dollar signs. It took only a moment. Uncle Sam put an affectionate arm around the servile Japanese, while slipping him dollars. A third figure dressed as a Chinese peasant armed with a stick dashed out and drove Uncle Sam back in confusion. Then someone pulled the light switch.

The next day was Memorial Day. We went to the American cemetery in Shanghai, where our consul general, John Cabot, spoke. He referred to the incident, contrasting the spirit of many of the men buried in the cemetery, who had died fighting to liberate China from the Japanese, with the misguided Chinese students who were insulting the best international friend the country had. Up in Nanking, the American ambassador, Dr. John Leighton Stuart, who had been a lifelong missionary teacher in China, who had educated thousands of young Chinese, spoke along the same line.



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But then in the various universities, suddenly there was an exhibit of photographs. At Episcopal St. John's University in Shanghai, one of the best, there was one on the theme of America imperialism rearming Japan. University authorities ordered the exhibit removed. Demonstrations broke out there and at universities across the country, carefully orchestrated, spread like a prairie fire. The students were able, at St. John's, to force the resignation of the president of the university. These demonstrations peaked in Shanghai with a gigantic anti-American parade. Americans were told to stay off the streets.

Then all of a sudden, the Communists, for whatever their tactical reasons, simply called that particular campaign off. It was very disturbing to see how they could manipulate things.

### Madman Comes to Call

I want to tell one other quick anecdote about family. I had a jeep. It was a surplus military jeep. When we got it, it had grass literally growing out of the engine block. But nonetheless, it was transportation. We had moved to French town, had a very nice flat there. One night, we had to go to some official function and didn't take the jeep. I came back with my wife, and the elevator operator was excitedly chattering about something. He led me out back to the parking lot. My jeep's windshield was broken, spider webbed. There were hammer marks on the hood. He made a motion of hammering, I said, "Who?" He pointed upstairs, said, "He go your place." I said, "My God!" So we rushed to the elevator. The door opened on our floor, a very elegant place. The glass partitions had all been smashed, glass scattered about the floor. There were hammer marks all over our front door. Our children were in there. I called the servant. He peeked out, then opened the door.

It turned out it was a British guy who lived on the floor below us. His brother—and I called the British Embassy—had gone to Hong Kong to arrange to have him shipped back to a mental institution in Great Britain. This guy had a big beard, he was dressed in his

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pajamas, had a belt, with a golf club like a sword. He'd gone to a cocktail party at a flat below us, we learned where he'd gone into the middle of the crowded room and yelled, "Bull shit!" Then walked out. Nobody paid any attention. You know cocktail parties.

*Q: He was the guy who had smashed up your place?*

WILSON: Yes, I learned his wife had gone off with an American pilot. He was anti-American and psychotic. He heard our American voices. That set him off. His brother, who was quite well-to-do, had a big limousine and a driver. This guy, next morning, called the car, and in his outlandish costume, told the driver to take him to the British Embassy. On the way, he periodically would lean out the window and clunk somebody with this golf club. When he got to the British Embassy—you know, in those days we all had Sikh guards, and they were very big physical specimens—he ran up to this Sikh guard and clunked him. That's not the kind of person you clunk. So the guard went after him. My contact at the British Embassy said this guy cowered back in the car, wanted to be taken to a mental institution. That's what they did.

My wife was very much a victim of culture shock. Like many Americans, she had thought of Chinese as being extremely gracious and well mannered. Of course, many of them are, but times were hard and out there in the streets you had a lot of situations.

Lorane became pregnant. The Communists were beginning to advance in the north. Our consul general said if Americans didn't have something of importance to keep them there, they should leave. Many did, but many didn't. Of course, American dependents were ordered evacuated. The government enabled us to ship our personal effects out. Then Lorraine flew on a military plane to Manila with a number of the dependents on December 7, 1948. They put them in an old Army camp near the university to wait out until they could come back to Shanghai.

*Q: Did she go back to the States then?*

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WILSON: No, she waited. The theory was this. Up north, during the interval between the Communists taking over after the Nationalists had left would be a period of anarchy. So that's one reason they wanted our dependents out. The other thing, they said, was to wait until the dust settled. Then they could come back. Some dependents went to Japan. Brad Conner's wife went to Japan, where she had her child.

Some admiral loaned us husbands a plane, and we were able to fly over to Manila at Christmas time, take presents and see our wives and kids. Then later, when our third baby, Mark, was born, I was able to get on the flight over. Then I hitchhiked back on a military plane to Okinawa, then Shanghai, where things were beginning to heat up.

### Approach of the Communists

It was mid-February of '49. The Communist armies had one-fourth of China. They were halted on the banks of the Yangtze. The Nationalist government had gone to Canton in the south. From there they went on over to Taipei. Brad Conners went with our embassy, following them down. Some of us were asked if we would stay behind. The idea was to see what could be done with the Communists because, actually, we'd never had any official experience dealing with the Communists. So Brad asked me to stay, John Henderson and one or two others.

We had an evacuation plan. I'll just tell you about that for a minute. Shanghai was divided into sections, and various members of the consulate were leaders of some section. Each section had a collection point, like the Columbia Country Club, the American School, and the consulate general itself. Each section team had a squad of Marines, plus a couple of men from the consulate who were familiar with visa work and at least one American who spoke Chinese. Some of these were businessmen. They had radios. My responsibility was to work with one of these as a general "gofer" or whatever. The idea was, if there were an emergency, trucks would collect these people, take them through the back streets to a place down from Shanghai on the Whangpoo River, where they'd be shipped out to a

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waiting hospital ship. One of the things that they asked me to do was print bilingual posters with the American flag in English and Chinese, stating this was American property. These posters went up all around the city.

Many old China hands were saying, "Oh, you're going to see a compromise in the usual Chinese way. The war's over." One thing that came out of it, USIS got better office space. The consulate moved to a nearby building on the bund owned by the U.S. We took over the ground floor of the building across from Hamilton House. It had been a bank—high ceilings, a balcony. We had our USIS offices up on the balcony, with the library down below. I wrote back to an old contact in Harry Casler's office where I remembered they had a gigantic camera that could make huge photographic prints. I had these huge photographs of Americana mounted as murals around our balcony. It was very striking. You could see them from the street, through the windows. We used the windows as show cases advertising our products. One of the photographs I have that I call "lowering of the bamboo curtain," is a nice shot of the window advertising our free magazines and free book loans. Right in front are barbed wire barricades that have been pushed aside. Three or four Communists soldiers with their rifles are advancing. So that was the bamboo curtain coming down.

Even though the Red Army was getting closer, we managed to open a new USIS branch in the German School. Our military had suddenly left, because there was this incident, you may recall, of the British frigate, Amethyst. It went up the river to Nanking, gunboat diplomacy, to help safeguard British citizens during this period of anarchy. But instead, the Communists, with the heavy artillery on the banks, caught them in the narrow river and blew the hell out of them. That word wasn't lost on our Navy, because immediately the military cleared out. We were left with the responsibility of looking after military property. They told me, "You can have anything you want." I went over there with Loren Reeder. My God, here were warehouses! I mean, acres of warehouses filled with everything imaginable. I didn't want anything except some photo paper, as I recall. Even then, good old bureaucracy. Brad said they had to transfer the cost from their budget to our budget.

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Meanwhile, Chinese thieves were getting in and stealing millions of dollars worth all the time.

The pilot I was living with left a note on an envelope that said, "I'll get in touch with you. I had to leave, going to Hong Kong." So he flew off with a plane. All pilots were flying transport planes to safety. Then, as they came back, they'd sit out at the airport with the propellers turning. I ran my roommate's personal possessions out there. He couldn't leave his plane and come into the city.

*Q: After he left permanently, did he lose the plane? Did he keep it in Hong Kong?*

WILSON: They kept them based in Hong Kong and Taipei, but they wouldn't leave anything. They'd just fly back up 'til the last. The population influx to Taiwan was astonishing, people going there and to Hong Kong and everywhere else.

We had an American amateur theater group in Shanghai, and they put on "Boy Meets Girl" while all this was happening. (Laughs) One of the guys, a friend of mine, an oil man, had a reading for a play at his house out in the suburbs, and he wanted us to drink up his champagne because he didn't want to leave it for the Communists. He had a couple of cases of champagne. So it was quite incongruous, we were out there in the garden, seated in a circle, the house boys in white jackets serving cold champagne while we were reading comedy lines, and you could see the lines and lines of refugees going by.

For some reason, the Nationalist authorities had a fence built, a 35-mile long fence around the city. There was a cash famine. The streets were lined with people trying to trade whatever they had or whatever they manufactured—flashlights or vacuum bottles or whatever. This was quite a difference from previously, when we had to deal with inflated currency which was up into the millions and millions and millions of dollars. You could take a paper grocery bag with you just to have a little money to buy a newspaper or something.

Communists Take Shanghai

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John Henderson and I were living together in my place, and we knew, of course, that the Communists were coming. They'd been fighting near the city, and we heard the thunder of artillery all the time. Then one day we saw Nationalist soldiers retreating. They went right past our place on Avenue Joffe.

*Q: Named for the French marshal.*

WILSON: Yes. They were retreating to get on boats down south. The very last of that bunch was an armored car that raced down the street, firing in all directions. It hit one of our windows. It had been raining. That night around midnight, we were watching from our windows. We saw some shadowy figures hugging the walls and coming in. Of course, the phones worked, so we were in touch with the labor attache downtown. He saw them take over the police station and take down the Nationalist flag.

The next morning, John and I went with the consul, Walter McConaughy, who lived in our building, had a car and a driver. We got in the car. On almost every corner there would be a Communist soldier with his weapon. Of course, the crowds would start coming out of the doors or the side streets. When necessary, they'd fire over their heads and they'd go back. Meanwhile, we went driving down fairly deserted streets. Then we heard a lot of firing. It got more intense, so we decided to get out of the car and hug the buildings to get to the office. There we found out we'd gone through the battle front. r consulate was now in no-man's-land.

The Communists had set up, along Soochow creek, a rear guard. There was a park almost opposite us where they had a lot of machine guns and troops. The Communists were coming down from the other direction. McConaughy asked me to put up some American flags so they'd know who we were. Lorin Reeder, this big guy, held my belt, and I put some on different sides of the building. Then over the front entrance. We had a Sikh guard. The flagstaff went out over the sidewalk. I got on a table and put a chair up on that, and the guard held it while I climbed up to hang this flag. I called it my "poor man's Iwo Jima."

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Right in front there was a mailbox, a Nationalist soldier, a 15-year-old kid, the last of the Nationalists' rear guard was hiding behind that mailbox. I have a picture of my putting up that flag up because Loren went out in the middle of the street and took it. It was foolish, bullets were flying around, but I'm glad to have the picture.

I saw the fire fight in an unusual way. It was like being on the 50-yard line of a football game, instead of as usual in combat, with your nose in the dirt.

We were in that building, the consulate, for several days. We did have some cots and food. One German, who was shot and had a broken leg, crawled about five blocks to our place. We were able to help him. One morning, I was up in the naval attache's office, had borrowed his field glasses, was looking down on this park. We wanted to know whether the park was abandoned. This Nationalist soldier came out, yawned, scratched himself, picked up his rifle, looked up, saw me, and KABOOM! I was looking right at him with the glasses. The barrel of his rifle looked as big as a tunnel. I jumped just in time.

Actually, what happened as the Communists approached, they didn't fire on us. But the Nationalists, on the other side, frantically began firing all over the place. Bullets were coming around the office. We were crawling up and down the corridors. One secretary left her desk to go to the bathroom or something. She closed the door. She thought, you know, sometimes people seem to think that will protect them. This .50-caliber came through the door, through her desk, and blew a hole in the wall. I believe she got that bullet and wore it later as a good luck charm.

Our consulate cabled the State Department to cable to Canton to get the Nationalists to contact their troops in Shanghai and tell them, for Christ's sake, to stop shooting at us, that we were friends. Finally, it was over. The car we came in had been parked across the street. It had a bullet that went right through the trunk, up through the seat, into the dashboard, and still it would operate, so we used it.

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For a while, we were able to run a restricted USIS program. Communist soldiers would visit our library. We were doing various things. But in July 1949, John Henderson was asked to come over to this Communist's office. They asked him to describe what he was doing, his operations. He knew, of course, they knew, and he gave them a nice briefing on what USIS was doing. They said, "That's fine. Stop it. No more." So we had to close up. The bamboo curtain had fallen.

### Fall of the Bamboo Curtain

Shanghai, 1949. I want to describe how the so-called bamboo curtain fell, how they shut off contact with the West, and how they established their own propaganda lines.

The U.S. was going to be the main target for vilification. Propaganda techniques were varied. In the press, for one thing, letters were planted asking straightforward questions, like "Why can't newspapers continue printing AP and UP stories?" And the Communist answer, in part, "Because they are the mouthpieces of imperialism." So the Communists could ask and answer their own questions.

The Communist Press and Publications Department of the Cultural and Educational Control Committee called a meeting of key Shanghai editors for a discussion forum. They were told that news and feature stories produce ideological and political effects, and the role of newspapers and magazines under the Communists is to serve the interest of the people. But the curious thing is, the editors received no specific guidance on how to treat stories, and so they began to find, in practice, it was not easy to satisfy the Communists and play their game. After three months, the editor of the Ta Kungpao, the Chinese New York Times, printed a public apology on the front page for his inability, despite trying hard, to manifest to the fullest degree the propaganda and educational value of the paper.

*Q: In other words, then, you were still there, even though you were not permitted to operate any longer. You were still in Shanghai after the Communists had taken over.*



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WILSON: That's right. I was there almost six months because they wouldn't let us leave.

*Q: They wouldn't let you operate, but they wouldn't let you leave.*

WILSON: No. I'll get to that, too, because just to deviate for a second, the Communists did not have the technical expertise to run the factories and do many things associated with this city. They wanted the foreigners to stay around and run these places until they could properly take over. They didn't want to drop everything overnight. They wouldn't let anybody out. That was part of the problem—it was the problem. I'll describe that in a little bit.

Back to the press. The newspaper editors were having a hard time. They were trying to print and make the newspapers serve the Communists, or serve the people, as they said. News from the outside world had to come through a Communist screen. I read a translated article in the press tracing Sino-American relations for a century, the object to prove there was no such thing as traditional friendship. In this article, the writer used the epithet “American imperialist” 32 times; “American aggressors” 18 times; “American reactionaries” eight times, and so on. It was very boring to read this stuff, but that's the way it was.

They had an editorial in one of the papers, commenting on USIS of the past. We were the “megaphones of the imperialists,” and it said we had been ordered to cease our activities, and although on the surface, USIS looked like a cultural liaison in public relations such as movie shows, library services, concerts, photo exhibits, giving advice to students going to America, the article said that in fact, the center of work was the dissemination of official news dispatches and the gathering of information concerning public opinion reaction to America. Our posts were filled with Secret Service men trained by the FBI, and we were just megaphones of imperialism.

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The radio editors of Shanghai were called in for a lecture. They didn't understand how things worked under Communists. Worst of all, some of them were still relaying the Voice of America. That was a no-no. Motion picture people and producers were called in and told their films had to reflect the policy of the government, that films should educate the people, reform their thoughts, encourage production. American commercial films, which had been very popular, now another technique, they had the movie industry workers union demand that the government immediately impose censorship on the poisonous American-made pictures. As these movies disappeared, it was announced that 200 Russian films with Chinese lip sync had been imported. Anything American was erased. Street names, like Wedemeyer Road named after the American general, were changed; brand names, products, soaps, cigarettes. In every element of society, the Communist control mechanism was taking over.

The old China hands were mystified by the behavior of the Communists. First of all, they had never really thought they had good troops. Overnight, right after they took over, the city was plastered with thousands of posters, reassuring the populace that their property would be protected, and it was. Unlike the Nationalists, the Communist soldiers slept on the sidewalks, rather than intrude into any home or building. They refused to accept so much as a cigarette without paying for it. There was no doubt, given the turbulence of the past, when the Nationalists soldiers did exactly the opposite, that many people in the city were happy to see the Communists come as a promise of peace and order.

I had my first direct contact with one of the Communists when I went over to pick up a suit at my tailor on the grounds of Broadway Mansion, where the Foreign Press Club used to be. Right after I had the fitting, I stepped outside and found myself face to face with a Communist soldier who had a Tommy gun, and he stuck it in my stomach and said something in Chinese. I couldn't understand him. I began backing toward the tailor shop, because I knew the tailor spoke English. The soldier followed. Of course, the usual crowd gathered. In the old days, always a crowd would gather and the police would tell them to

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go away, but they wouldn't do it. In this case, the guy noticed the crowd, just turned around and waved his gun, said something like, "Beat it!" and they did. They knew he meant business. Well, my tailor came, and basically what the guy simply wanted was for me to write in his notebook my name, address, where I was going, and why.

They had not announced a curfew. The Nationalists had a curfew. We decided we'd better keep observing the Nationalist curfew hours. I was coming home one night when another soldier flagged me down and escorted me to a wooden shack. While in there, a roving patrol came up and surrounded the shack with fixed bayonets. This time, I finally found out they wanted me to turn my headlights down. They also wanted to know who I was, where I had been, and going.

The Communists had no diplomatic relations with the U.S. They referred to us as a bogus American consulate general, and refused to deliver any mail addressed to the consulate general. So my letters from Lorane were returned before I could get word to her that she had to use the street address of the consulate.

To celebrate their victory, the Communists formed a huge victory parade. I watched this forming from the roof of the consulate. There were hundreds of thousands of people, red banners all over the place.

Meanwhile, they were telling employees to demand various things. Our military had let their Chinese employees go. They formed a group to demand higher separation settlements than they were entitled to under our regulations. Consul General John Cabot said he would negotiate with a committee, not with all of them. They turned that down, blocked the entrances. We were prisoners inside our own consulate. We were there for several days. Cabot got us to put our hands in our pockets to break out of there via a back alley which led to the street. When we all went out, the parade was beginning to pass. These workers had used bicycle chains to lock the gates. As the parade passed,

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they stopped the trucks in front of us to let everybody in the truck shout, "American imperialists!" and so on. We had to go back into the consulate again, losing much face.

They went away, the workers, but a few days later, a small group of them came, gained entrance and got hold of our administrative officer, Reuben Thomas. They locked him in his office, put the chains back so we couldn't get out. For a day and a night they kept Reuben at his desk, they wouldn't give him anything to eat or drink and wouldn't let him go to the toilet, while they negotiated. It was blackmail, and in the end, the U.S. had to pay these people to get them off our back.

There was another aspect of their propaganda against foreigners. They felt the Chinese man in the street had too much respect for foreigners. They wanted to break this up. So they began picking different nationalities to create an incident on which to focus. They got a British consular official and accused him of beating up his house boys, forced him to write a public apology; then a German, claimed he had abused a dye works employee; they had a Frenchman, accused him of knocking a Communist officer from his bicycle, make him spend two weeks sweeping the streets, pay a fine, medical expenses, public apologies, wear a sign around his neck, all that.

Then it was the American turn. We had a young vice consul by the name of Bill Olive. He was a very slight, unassuming man. He had just married one of the secretaries. He went out just before this parade in his jeep. He stopped to get gas and disappeared. Three days later, he came back to the embassy. He had been physically beaten. Mentally he was in very bad shape. We got his story. He had been arrested. They took him to a police station, charged him with driving on a street closed for the parade, even though there were no signs. By accident, he had knocked over a bottle of ink, they said, on the desk of the sergeant, so he was attacked from behind, beaten into insensibility with rifle butts and boots. He was locked in a cell without food, water, or medical attention, while two guards kept bayonets thrust through the bars at his throat. He wasn't permitted to move a muscle, and then every few hours they'd take him out, put him in front of a blinding light,

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and harangue him. They wanted him to write a confession, which he wrote. They'd look at them, crumble them up, throw them back in his face, and say, "Write a better one." And so he wrote, under their tutelage, a confession which then was published on the front page of the newspapers, which included such things as saying, "I am grateful to the People's Government for the consideration given my case, for the lenient and kind treatment accorded me."

The thing is that none of us knew what the hell was going to happen at any point, because there was no way to get any help from our own government or any other government. The so-called knock on the door at night.

Some American correspondents still there seemed sympathetic to the Communist side. They thought the Communists were doing a lot of good things. We called them in, John Henderson and I, to show them, with the doctor, Bill's cuts and bruises and let him tell his story. It did help to change some minds, I think.

### Life Under the Communists

Meanwhile from Taiwan, the Nationalists claimed they had mined the Yangtze River entrance. They sent bombers over with 500-pound bombs. One of the first ones hit a little foreign cemetery across from the old German school which we had made into a USIS library for that part of town. The Nationalists flew other flights for propaganda, too high to be hit. The Communists, as a counter-propaganda move, put machine guns—they didn't have any aircraft—on the roofs of the buildings, so that when these planes were up there, all of a sudden the machine guns would go off, and you'd have to watch out for falling lead. Then the newspapers would claim the "bandit" planes had been driven away by the valiant troops.

John and I, driving from our home to the office, periodically would have to stop and abandon our jeep, run into a doorway as the machine guns started suddenly blasting. There was no warning. Right across from my office window, they had one of those things

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on the roof. Here I would be sitting, and all of a sudden the guy's firing and swiveling around. (Laughs)

*Q: Did any of them ever come through your window?*

WILSON: No, fortunately. Between the iron bombs, the Nationalist dropped propaganda leaflets. You'd see the leaflets spreading in the air. Some fell in the street, where police very efficiently collected them.

This made the Voice of America increasingly important. It was the only way we could reach the people. We found one thing. When there was something really important said over the Voice of America, that word got around rapidly by word of mouth.

Then there was another problem. The Communist currency, in effect, cut our dollars in half, so we could no longer afford servants. We told them. The servants were dumbfounded. They said all their life, no matter what kind of hardship, they could at least get enough money for rice, and now they couldn't. To make a long story short, they turned us over to a Communist labor negotiator, who, in turn, made us go in front of the People's Court.

We went to a desk in this place. John and I stood in front of the Communist official while the servants and others stood around. The labor negotiator yelled at us for four hours. We had to wind up paying them four months' pay. Also pay for the rickshaw fare to get them to the place. Our baby Amah was the only one who wouldn't take part. The poor woman had converted to Christianity. Before I left, I found her a little room. All I could do was pay for it six months ahead, give her some food and money. I don't know whatever happened to her. She was a very good woman.

A big typhoon, the worst in the city's history, hit Shanghai, blew out the picture window in our flat. The city was flooded. John and I had to wade up to our waists in that filthy water with corpses floating about.

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Meanwhile, our USIS staff, now were demanding more separation pay. John was handling these negotiations. A few of these people were Communists under cover. The sister of the man who did our book translations became the deputy mayor of Shanghai under the Communists. Most of them, however, were good people caught up in a nightmare. They would come secretly in my office to apologize, say goodbye, or whatever. Some would break out crying.

Finally, when we agreed to settle up to their satisfaction, we had them write a letter to the officials that everything was settled, because earlier, they had written a letter to the officials saying we should not leave China until we'd settled this up.

In August 1949, the Communists said they would begin giving 25 applications a day for exit visas. They knew thousands wanted to leave. At night, around 2:00 o'clock in the morning, there would be long lines waiting. The first time I went, I waited eight hours in the rain. They'd open the door and let in so many. The Communists also wanted the populace to see the spectacle of foreigners lined up, sort of begging, especially the Americans.

So we decided we could play that game another way. We began to go downtown late at night with camp stools, cards, magazines, sandwiches, coffee, and just sit around and enjoy ourselves. The Chinese have a good sense of humor, and many of them were amused to see us out there gossiping, munching on sandwiches, as though at a picnic. So the Communists were losing face.

They said, "You have to have a guarantor to get out." One of our employees, Tommy Dunn, was my guarantor, and I was very happy about that. I remembered that later when he was an employee of ours in Hong Kong.

When I finally got in, the man behind the desk had some kind of list. He had on his Mao uniform and said I had to go to another office down the hall. I went there. Another man in a Mao uniform looked at his list and said, "You're not to leave China."

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I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "You've got labor problems."

I said, "Oh, that. That's all settled. It's all done with."

He said, "I have this letter here from USIS employee. You have labor problems." So he said he had no record of any clearance. I would have to go to the Central Labor Bureau. That was over in Broadway Mansions, across Soochow creek.

I headed for that office. The man over there, I finally got to see, said, "Yes, they had been notified. Yes, I was correct." So I said, "Will you please give me a copy of the letter or else send it to the guy?"

He said, "No. I told you it's taken care of. It's taken care of."

So I went back to the first guy, and he was huffy. Here I was caught like a yo-yo between these two officials. Meanwhile, going back and forth, the machine guns would go off, I'd duck into a doorway. I remember once—I'm tall—and this short soldier with a bayonet, people all jammed together, had that damn bayonet practically in my throat.

Finally, I got one of our ex-employees to go out and round up enough of them to write another letter. I gave that to the official. So that was that, or so I thought.

We were only permitted to take out \$10 with us and one footlocker. It had to be inspected. When I took my footlocker down, my clothes were covered with a layer of three-by-five cards. I had planned to write a book about aviation in China. I knew many of these pilots. I had a lot of information about flying in China. Down at the wharf, one of the Communist officials came up, opened my footlocker, saw the cards, picked one up, looked at it, got a fistful, and three or four others came over. I could see the card he was holding. It was a description of an airfield, measurements, everything. I said, "Oh, Jesus Christ. That's going



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to do it.” But this was one of those lucky things. They just threw the cards back and sealed it. Maybe they couldn't read it, I don't know.

### Leaving Shanghai

The steamship, General Gordon, which had been a troop ship during the war, finally was permitted to come and get us. They had painted an enormous American flag on the top to keep off bombers. I had sailed on her once during the war. I went down and got in line to get on the ship. I had just got one foot on the gangway when a Communist got hold of me and said, “You've got to come back here to a shed.” In the shed was an official. He had a list. He said, “You're not supposed to leave China.”

I said, “What?”

He said, again, about this labor thing. But I had a copy now of this precious letter, which I showed him. I was looking at him, this one man between me and freedom. Fortunately, he let me go.

We had decided, we men from the consulate, we would give our bunks to the women and children, so they assigned us way the hell down in the hold, some lousy spot. I decided I'd sleep on deck on top of some life preservers. We sailed away down the Yangtze River, didn't hit any mines. On the ocean it felt, as people always say, like the air was cleaner, that you could breathe. You were back in freedom.

I caught a plane in Tokyo and flew to San Francisco. My wife had boarded one of the President ships in Manila. I managed to get on the pilot's boat and run out under the Golden Gate and meet her and the children.

After I left China, it was estimated the Communists had established a domestic net of over 3 million full-time propagandists, not counting other millions of part-time workers. The Central Committee planned ultimately, I read, for party propagandists to form 1% of

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the Chinese population. The people call them mind doctors. The Communists had basic themes carried through every means of communication, tailoring materials to different localities and situations; finding new techniques to reach illiterate masses; blackboards put in every village in China for news and cartoons; town criers, men with megaphones spread the message; newspaper reading groups; plays; street plays; letter-writing campaigns; cartoon books, very effective; and they produced in 1950, 1,000 titles and over 5 million copies. Mukden, which before the takeover had 40 cartoon book stalls. Within two years the Communists had installed 459.

The thing of symbols was interesting to me. For example, the atomic bomb. They had a symbol for the atomic bomb. They were trying to say we were guilty of germ warfare. They had a retort with a skull to represent that. They did all kinds of things with the American flag—skulls with stars, the stripes could become a cage for a prisoner, the Statue of Liberty could be wearing atomic bombs for a hat. These symbols were given to the people right down to every level so they'd understand them. It's rather amusing, if that's the word, from those days to this, how a lot of American protesters have picked up on these varied type symbols.

I returned to Washington in the fall of 1949, Prior to the takeover, there hadn't been much press coverage of China. The American people were utterly stunned by the Communist takeover. Of course, when I got back, as usual, nobody knew anything about USIS or our work over there, no matter whether a college president or a taxi driver.

### The Regional Production Center Idea

I decided in my recommendations, which were just three or four, that one of the things needed was our own Far East publishing plant that we controlled to produce some of these type of materials that the Communists seemed to be doing so successfully. About that time, the Korean War was building up, and Truman had declared the Campaign of

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Truth. We got a lot more money. So all of a sudden, they said, "Yes, fine." They gave me the money and decided that Manila would be the location.

I had, about this time, too, decided on a magazine. You know, a lot of USIS was in New York—VOA and the Russian magazine. They wanted to get it all in Washington. The magazine people wanted to control all magazines, just as IPS wanted to control all publications. I met a guy in the Agency by the name of Ken Sayre, who was a printer technician. I got him to help me. Also a layout artist, Mona Bennett. I got clippings in various languages of the Far East and made a dummy of a magazine. I got Ken to give me advice about how we could do this with offset printing. This was a case where not knowing a lot about something didn't get in the way of your thinking. So I proposed a central core magazine for which each post could add or subtract articles, to have their own tailored country language editions.

Charlie Arnot was head of Press and Publications at the time. This is a bit of bureaucracy. IPS did not have charge of the Russian language magazine, Amerika, which was to be moved to Washington. Charlie backed me. Off I went to Manila with the idea of starting this new regional printing plant and a magazine. In May of 1950 we arrived in Manila. It was June 25 that the Korean War broke out.

*Q: That's a very interesting rundown. I later got to know Holly Sollenberger, who apparently was in Peking at the time that the Communists marched in there. I got to be very good friends with him because we were living in the same apartment compound in '51 in Falls Church, Virginia. He had somehow gotten up on the top of a building or a monument, and he had an amateur motion picture camera. I don't know how many hundred feet he took of the Chinese Communist armies marching into Peking at the time, but one night we went over to his place for dinner and he showed this picture that he had. I don't know what he's done with it in the meantime. It was a very interesting evening that we spent.*

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I presume, incidentally, another thought, John Henderson was the same John Henderson who was press attache in Tokyo while I was there, who got himself in trouble with the ambassador, because he and the ambassador had a big shouting match over the treatment the ambassador gave to the press when they came up to interview a delegation of governors over there, so he got thrown out and sent down to Indonesia. We lost him in Tokyo.

One final comment. You talked about the Campaign of Truth. That was my introduction to the State Department. I transferred over to State just at the time that we were gearing up for the Campaign of Truth, and I helped to defend that appropriation before Congress, which we finally got along about March or April of 1950.

We will call this the end of part one of your interview, and we will pick it up when we get to your activities in Manila.

WILSON: Okay. [Tape recorder turned off]

*Q: This is now the second part of the interview. We have finished the commentary on your experiences in Shanghai. You indicated that you were getting ready to try and start a regional printing center in Manila and had this idea for a magazine which would be a regional magazine for the Far East. What we are going to do now is take up the part of this experience which involves the regional center of Manila. Earl, will you take it from here?*

WILSON: We are talking about May of 1950. I reported in to Manila. I was not technically on the staff of the USIS in Manila, headed by Jim Meader at the time. The embassy was in the old High Commissioner's home on Dewey Boulevard on Manila Bay. It had a number of Quonset huts. USIS was mainly in one or two of these Quonset huts. They put me in a desk in the darkest, furthest corner of one of these. I was by myself, waiting for the printing presses and my printer, Ken Sayre, to arrive. But I'd only been there a day when the telephone rang. I didn't know who the heck would want me, so I picked up the phone

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and it was the American ambassador. He said he wanted to see me. It was Myron Cowan. Cowan had come back from consultation in Washington and was going to speak to some group. Brad Conners said would I write a speech for him. It would be a good way to get to know the ambassador. I did. When I went to see the ambassador in Manila, he asked me to be his speech writer. I said, "I'm sorry, I can't do that. I wasn't sent out here to do that." So he got mad at me and wouldn't speak to me for several months. (Laughs)

### First RPC Products and their Effectiveness

The Hukbalahap insurgents were very active. They had attacked a hospital and killed several people close to Manila in this particular incident. The Huks were trying to identify themselves with the day called "Cry of Valintawak," a cry of freedom, and somehow, I was asked what I thought we should do. USIS had a little press in a garage, with one man operating it. They printed the usual USIS handouts on it. I thought we ought to get photographs from the hospital of the victims, which we did. I made a poster, called it "The cry of Balintawak." We printed several thousand. The Philippines Veterans Association took them and posted them all over.

I said, "I'm going to call this place the Far East Regional Production Center, RPC, for short." That was the very first product of the RPC, this poster showing results of this terrorist raid on this hospital.

I had brought from Washington an authentic story about what the Chinese Communists did when they took over a village, first, what they promised, later, when they won, what they actually did. I decided to make a cartoon book out of it.

*Q: Was this a story about the Philippines?*

WILSON: No, about China. Q: So you were transferring, in effect, their actions in China, saying, "This is what you can expect in the Philippines."

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WILSON: Exactly. So I got an artist, we worked together, and turned out this cartoon book which was, I believe, the first ever done by the U.S. Government. It was called "When the Communists Came." We printed 2,000 copies on that little press in the garage. This time I got another call from the ambassador. When I went to see him, he had a copy of my cartoon book in his hand. He was very excited. He said, "This is the kind of thing we need to combat the Huks." He said, "I have shown your cartoon book to the Philippine foreign minister, Carlos Romulo, ~to the Papal Nuncio, and to the Minister of Defense." They all, he said, shared his enthusiasm. He told me to print more. So we started a new press run of 10,000 copies. Jose Alvarez, the printer, ultimately, with lots of training, became the chief printer of the RPC. He's in the United States as a citizen now, retired.

*Q: Do you know what he's doing? He's printing the only genuine Philippine newspaper in California.*

WILSON: No kidding.

*Q: He sent me, last year, four copies. I wrote a story for the newsletter, but Mary didn't use it. I wrote a story about his having been an editor for the RPC out there. I hope she's going to print it in the next edition, because I think it's a great story.*

WILSON: Jose was a wonderful guy, and as the RPC grew and grew and grew, there were times when different ones thought he didn't have the training. I insisted, and we got him back to the States and got him trained. He turned in a wonderful job. He's a good friend. I haven't seen him for a while.

Anyhow, those 10,000 copies rapidly disappeared. They had no attribution to USIS. That's the other thing. Most of this stuff I'm going to talk about had no U.S. Government attribution.

We placed some of these cartoon books for sale on commercial newsstands, others we just gave them away. The demand seemed insatiable, schools, clubs, civic organizations,

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Catholic Church, veterans' organizations, everybody clamored for copies. This little press was being overwhelmed. Our output was an add-on to USIS/Manila regular production.

In the midst of this—and this is where it gets interesting—I got a cable from Washington ordering me to stop producing this comic book until it had been approved by the Agency. Because up until that time, every publication had to be first approved in Washington. It also indicated that some back there were shocked that the Department of State, which we were still under, was engaged in a cartoon or comic book business. More than that, the Agency's press and publications section and other media divisions had been operating in a highly centralized approach where only they could originate material which the field would then disseminate. Here I was, breaking every one of their rules.

Well, I revolted. I sent a cable back, objecting. I said the cartoon book followed policy guidelines, that the ambassador was behind it. I said the demand was great, I should be permitted to continue printing. So the cables went zinging back and forth. The fire got hotter. Cowan, the ambassador, cabled, too, said this is what he wanted, what was needed. We won the battle.

It was a watershed, because from that point on, USIS folks in the field were given flexibility to develop independent local material within broad policy guidelines. Over the next two years, that cartoon book was published in almost every language and dialect in the Far East. That first year alone, we printed over a million copies. Somebody estimated that if they had been placed in a single stack, it would be 12 times the height of the Washington monument. Then we adapted to countries like Vietnam and Korea. The Agency eventually used the script to make an animated cartoon shown all over the world.

### Korean War

War broke out June 25, 1950, in Korea. The one thing Washington wanted to do was to communicate the idea to other nations that the members of the United Nations were behind the Republic of Korea, not just the U.S. alone. Using this same contract artist, I

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developed a cartoon poster showing 53 nations standing shoulder-to-shoulder in Korea to stop the invasion, which had a hammer and sickle. The garage press was too small for this large poster. I cabled Washington for \$50,000. The DCM said to me, "Do you know what you're doing?"

I said, "Yes." He couldn't believe it, but \$50,000 came right back. I contracted with one of the big Manila print shops, air mailed the poster in English to all the Far East posts, asking them to translate it, paste it up in their language, and mail it back, that we would print a local version for them, which we did.

*Q: Did you have the presses out there then?*

WILSON: No. This was done commercially. We printed thousands of copies, and the poster was displayed all over the Far East. That was the first real multi-country product of the new RPC. By the time I left two years later, we would have produced over 75 million publications.

There was an area on Manila Bay called Seafront Compound. The Navy had it previously, and the admiral in charge of the area had his quarters there. There were some other living quarters for officers. Then the Navy was transferred over to Subic. The embassy and some other agencies took over this place. So they gave me a big Quonset hut there for our presses, and they gave me for my residence the admiral's old quarters, two Quonset huts joined together. It was quite comfortable. They also gave me a mansion. A bomb had knocked a hole in the roof, later repaired when the Navy made an enlisted man's club out of it, spent lots of money renovating it. So here I had this beautiful building which had what was essentially a dance hall on the ground floor with a bar at one end and a platform stage at the other for a band. There was a balcony all around this big room where we had the offices. Here I had a lovely office with a nice veranda, where I put a lot of tropical plants, orchids, a parrot, and that kind of thing. All other buildings were battleship gray. Before they could stop me, I had our editorial offices painted Chinese red and gold. (Laughs)



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*Q: This was in the days before any government agency that was about to give up property had to notify General Services Administration which would have to put out a wire saying, "Does anybody want this material or this facility?" It would take about eight months before they could transfer anything, and half the time they never did get it transferred. So you were just lucky to be there early.*

WILSON: The embassy administrative officer was Jim Clore. He tried to give us a hard time, but I jumped too fast for Jim. He became a good friend of mine later.

So anyhow, there we were, and the presses arrived. But this is a curious thing. The very first press we got was my old Webb leaflet press from Shanghai, where they had bundled up a lot of U.S. Government property and shipped it to Hong Kong.

*Q: The Chinese had?*

WILSON: No, our people. Somehow, God knows how, it got to Hong Kong. And Hong Kong shipped it over to me, so it was the first little press. Not only that, but Loren Reeder had been assigned to RPC and arrived before Ken Sayre. So here Loren was with his beloved press. He put it together. On that press we began officially printing our very first stuff.

Incidentally, years later, when I went back to Manila on business, I found that little press, which had been used for years, was no longer used, retired to one corner of that vast plant. I had an artist do a Distinguished Service Cross of cardboard. We hung it on the little press for a photograph they later ran in our Agency paper.

I ran an ad for artists. My God, about 200 applicants turned up. I carefully selected a staff. They all stayed with RPC until retirement. Many of them had very distinguished art careers on the side in Philippines.

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Then Ken Sayre came. He was the production chief. I had to give him credit. He really knew his stuff. He put a drawing board across a couple of trestles and became designing the plant. It took 45 days from the time he took out his slide rule until we were in operation. He was later given an award for doing this.

John Henderson, my old roommate from Shanghai, turned up as the first RPC director. My title was Director of Operations. I was basically the editor. Loren was there as the photo technician. Then we had Dorothy Boyce, who eventually came out as magazine editor. She married some ambassador. And Ruth Taurig, layout artist.

*Q: She's still around here.*

WILSON: Yes. Later, Billy Mason came out, Mildred—Billy—Mason, as magazine editor, and Mona Bennett on layout.

### Free World Magazine and its Impact

Let me talk about this magazine. I started it, called it Free World. I put on the first cover a composite United Nations photo, faces of people of different races. We called ourselves the Free World Publishing Company, thinking no U.S. attribution would increase credibility. I started the idea of the core magazine, made a dummy in English, called it the “base” model, sent it to the posts. They could reject any story they felt unsuitable, add any they had, translate to their language, typeset, paste in, and return all to us for printing. I was delighted, because a lot of people had said this thing wouldn't work, but here we were, soon publishing the magazine in seven or eight languages and dialects.

That idea, incidentally, was not done commercially in those days, and now it's very much a commercial idea. I was reading recently somebody came up with the unique idea of dividing the United States into about eight regions for localized magazines.

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We tried to mix the stories. We had anti-Communist material, of course, against China, particularly, and the North Korean invasion. We ran stories on American support for the building of democracy; U.N. agencies; our combined military strength; stories on our economic and military aid; stories in support of friendly foreign governments; and of course, our foreign policy, and Americana.

It was hard in the beginning to get material from the posts. The Philippines had sent troops to Korea, one of the few countries that actually had troops there. I could not get any photographs of them. I finally talked to a Philippine Army friend who was going there. He took little home Kodak, took some pictures which I was finally able to use. Remarkable. And the magazines, getting them shipped was, in the beginning, also a problem. Sometimes we'd get them on a military flight, but mostly we had to go commercial air or on freighters.

Brad asked me to visit Saigon in 1950, write him what I thought of the USIS program. I found they really didn't have any USIS program of the type they had in other countries. The USIS officer in charge, more of a cultural than an information type, was one of the few people to speak French. He was being used as an interpreter constantly. He later was transferred. I think he went to Paris. He was hardly up the gangway before his information officer, Gene Gregory, who spoke Vietnamese, was placing large orders for our RPC products.

The Communist Chinese had entered the war in Korea, and there was some fear that with the U.S. engaged there, they would also move into Vietnam, their old stamping ground. So the French were trying to spread the word against this. Gene had a lot of leaflets made he wanted printed to warn the populace up north to be on their guard. We gave his order top priority. In three weeks we turned out 20 million leaflets. If laid end to end, they would have reached across the U.S. He didn't have any way to distribute these. (Laughs) But he gave

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them to the French. They used low-flying aircraft to shower them at key spots along the Chinese border. That was certainly a new one.

We gained familiarity with the area and talked to different posts. I took a fast tour, went down the east coast of Borneo to Indonesia, where I managed to visit Bali one weekend. President Sukarno had, unfortunately, just ordered the maidens to cover up their bosoms, part of a nationalistic thing.

One thought came to my mind as I went around these various places. Colonialism was, of course, after World War II, out or going out. The new independent governments were faced with a need to make their scattered people see they belonged to one country, had one government, and give it their support. Of course, the Communists, with their propaganda, were seeking to undermine these new governments. The U.S. was giving aid to help nation building. Undoubtedly, much of this was effective, and communications should be playing a significant role.

### World Photo Review

So back in Manila, I drew on my Shanghai poster experience, and I came up with a new product I called the World Photo Review. It was a poster with a bright colored background and five or six photographs on different themes. Our report of the Republic of Korea was a constant in this at that time. It was produced weekly. Photos came from Washington and from the posts. I wrote the captions, cabled them to the nine countries served, they translated the captions, mailed them back, and we printed and mailed the stuff out. We were soon producing over a quarter-million of these posters each week in 13 languages and dialects. To give you an idea, for the Philippines we printed in Bicolano, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Ilongo, Ilocano, Tagalog, Visayan, Pampango, and English. When a new language was added, circulation would spurt. USIS Saigon covered all of Indochina. They decided to put out a Cambodian edition. Buddhist monks volunteered to put up 9,000 copies on temple walls throughout the country. That made up a new audience of millions.

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Luck was with me. I didn't have to clear any of this stuff with anybody. Even my boss was too busy with other things. Old Ken would come to my office, say his presses were hungry, running out of stuff. I'd think up something. I had this stable of artists and writers. I could get a new pilot model out overnight, and often did. It would have been impossible in Washington or anywhere else.

There were several fortuitous circumstances. First of all, when I arrived in Manila, being a new boy, I was told to go give a speech at a luncheon given by leaders of Filipino women's clubs. I was seated at the head table with five or six men. I understood were editors. They were to give a talk of a few minutes and tell what they thought was happening or going to happen in the Philippines. I had just come out of Communist China, and I felt I'd talk about that. A man on my right, who was to give the main address, was big and handsome and impressive. I thought he was another editor, but when he spoke, he turned out to be the Secretary of Defense, Raymond Magsaysay, soon to become president of the Philippines. He had those ladies eating out of his hands. He said he was going to be a peso-a-year man. So anyhow, he and I hit it off very well. I became friends with the guy that became president.

His head of propaganda was Jose Crisol. I also became friendly with him. Jim Meader, who was in charge of USIS Philippines, couldn't care less at that time about publications. He was an academic man. The political officer, Jim Bell, later to be ambassador to Malaysia, was an activist. He and I became good friends. He liked this stuff I was turning out. I could go get it cleared through the embassy by Jim, then over at Magsaysay's place by Jose Crisol. We got the Philippine veterans to disseminate this stuff.

Once that was done, I had a pilot copy I could send to the other posts. Many of them picked up on it for local adaptation. It worked like a charm.

Actually, later, the Agency ran an informal survey of the posts. They had gotten the idea we were stuffing publications down their throats. They didn't give me a copy of the survey.

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They were going to use results to cut us off at the knees. But it turned out the posts came back in very strong support of us. So we went on. I found out in the first year I had personally written or edited, I believe, 80% of all publications in the Far East.

*Q: These days when everybody's wondering about evidence of effectiveness, this is certainly one of the early examples of extensive evidence of effectiveness. I wish we had more of this today.*

WILSON: In those days, as perhaps today, propaganda was divided into three categories—black, handled by the CIA, no attribution to the U.S.; white, with attribution to the U.S.; gray propaganda somewhere in between the other two, but with no U.S. attribution. Almost all of our products from RPC fell into the gray area.

We operated on different levels. We had stuff for the masses, of course, pictures and so on; then we had more sophisticated stuff in the magazines and later in books. Our propaganda materials moved out in different countries by jeeps, trains, ox carts, dug-out canoes, backs of human carriers, out to what's been called the rice roots. We learned more about how difficult it is to deal in simplicities than complexities. For example, to explain to an illiterate farmer, why his son was fighting in faraway Korea for peace or collective security, when the Communists would be quick to tell him his son was there to die for American imperialism.

Continuation of interview: October 17, 1988

Anti-Communist Material Used Effectively in Philippines and Elsewhere in East Asia

*Q: We are picking up this morning where we left off last week. Earl will continue his discussions with reference to the Regional Service Center.*

WILSON: After I left, the Agency changed the name of these centers from Regional Production Center to Regional Service Center. I want to give just a few pieces of

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background explanation, because we were absolutely breaking new ground. I had come out of Communist China. The Chinese Communists, inside China, to consolidate their victories, were engaged in a massive propaganda campaign, using every conceivable means of communication, propagandizing their own people. We got samples of many of their magazines and pamphlets through our Hong Kong office.

In looking at them, I got an idea that we could use some of this material against them, because this stuff was not meant to be seen outside of China. With the help of Ken Sayre, I could take photographs from these magazines, and he would copy then, use a process to match the dots, and we could get excellent reproduction. I turned out some sample pieces of material. The first one was very hard hitting anti-Communist document entitled "Red China, Red With Blood." You will recall the Communists had the children of parents turning against them, had trials in a stadium, with thousands upon thousands of people present. The child would denounce his parents, and then the parent would be often executed. It was very tough stuff. Anyhow, that was one type of thing.

Another approach, because the Hukbalahap rebels were going strong in the Philippines. I produced a pamphlet called "What Would Communism Mean to You?" in which on one page it would show, in graphic terms, some democratic concept of liberty faced with its opposite under Communism. These would often be fairly simple, like perhaps under Communism, a bird in a cage, under freedom the bird flying away. It was intended for use by Philippine PSYOPS officers. An example was when Huks hit a village in northern Luzon and beheaded the mayor, while the troops pursued the insurgents, the PSYOPS officers would assemble villagers and use these pamphlets to explain. A million were produced in different dialects for the Philippines.

We produced something called the story of Dr. Leong. This was intended for the overseas Chinese. It showed a true story of a Chinese doctor who had been sent to work with the Communist troops in Korea. I thought humor might be a weapon, and I got a supply of baby portraits from a portrait studio in Hong Kong. I called it "Little Comrades," with

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humorous anti-Communist captions. They were popular. Then we got Vietnamese and Indonesian baby photos and did the same thing. Two years later, when I left Manila and was in Rome, and again in Vienna, where they had major political campaigns going with the Communists very much involved, I saw large anti-Communist posters of Italian babies or Austrian babies.

We thought religion might be a bulwark against Communism, and we worked with the Catholic Church in the Philippines. I did a poster called the "Rosary for Peace" that went up in all the churches. We did a very elaborate history of Buddhism, printed thousands of copies for a major Buddhist revival in Burma.

They were to hold elections in the Philippines. I got involved helping what was then a new organization called NAMFREL, National Movement for Free Elections, a non-partisan organization dedicated to getting the citizens registered. That organization has gone on to this very day, 1988, when it was quite active with the registration and elections in the Philippines that defeated Marcos.

I was working with several people on that, one of whom, come to think of it, was Jaime Ferrer. He was a senior minister under Cory Aquino, and he was assassinated about five months ago. My old Filipino secretary, who now lives in California and is an American citizen, wrote me saying, "Do you remember when you used to work with Jaime, trying to develop democracy in the Philippines?"

*Q: Who did they suspect of the assassination?*

WILSON: It was those murder squads of Communists. We turned out a booklet for NAMFREL called "Let's Have Free Elections," and we printed half a million of those in a few weeks, then thousands of posters, postcards, car stickers, and leaflets. In that particular instance, the Huk campaign to disrupt the elections failed.



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*Q: You say you were turning out these thousands of pamphlets and so forth. Was this a campaign which you were conducting directly out of the RSC, or were you going through USIS Manila?*

WILSON: I said earlier it was an interesting situation, because I was not attached to USIS Manila. The PAO, Jim Meader, was not involved or interested in these type operations. He was caught up in the educational cultural program. But the chief of the political section, Jim Bell, was gung-ho for this type of operation. I could show him a sample publication and basically, Jim would get it approved. Then I would the okay of the Philippine Government, their propaganda chief, Jose Crisol. They worked with the Philippine veterans' organization, a large organization for the diffusion of this stuff. So in a matter of days or weeks these things could be zipped through. Once I had one in English that had been approved, I could send it to the other posts, and more often than not, they would adapt it to their own uses.

In that way, I started an eight-page publication called "Young Citizens Life," intended to reach young people through the schools in Asia. It became quite a staple for some years.

Washington continued to put out pilot models, but they were rather distant from the scene. They would send out something like Herblock's anti-Communist cartoons, but the humor and references were lost, generally, out there. Or they might send out something like a history of Sino-Soviet relations which would be of interest to a limited number of people, but not to broad audiences.

I had been forming my own rough philosophy of what we were trying to do. Remember we were in the Cold War, and we were very, very much trying to defeat Communism. I felt that if I had to talk to a young officer, I would tell him we're not out here trying to make people like the United States. We're trying to make people see that U.S. actions are in harmony with their interests, and that it was in their interest to oppose Communism. That we, together, were working for a better world with more food, better health, higher income,

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and peace for the individual, for his government, his country, and that the Communists were trying to subvert this growing democratic revolution.

In my view, we weren't going to gain many converts by preaching about the American Revolution or about life in America. I figured the average Asian knew very little about either the U.S. or Russia, but they did know firsthand about disease, hunger, poverty, lack of civil rights, and so on. I was beginning to get this feeling that perhaps if we could begin increasing adherents, it might truly make a difference.

Our Harris offset presses had arrived, been installed, and our plant was really quite good. Ken Sayre had done a good job. Loren Reeder, my old colleague from Shanghai, hated seeing that little high-speed Webb press sitting idle in the corner. Loren didn't like this, and I didn't like it because I hated to see blank pages or unused capacity. We had lots of paper for this thing. So I thought of an idea which goes back a little bit, maybe, to Disney and his efforts in Latin America, for his cartoons during the war.

### Agricultural Leaflet

I went over to see the agricultural attache in our embassy. I said, "Look, if you could get across simple, technical information to the farmers in the Philippines on some idea for improvement, what would you tell them?" Well, this sort of took him back.

He said, "I'd tell them how to build a chicken house," because I had said it had to be something they could do on their own without money or help, as long as they had some technical advice.

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Their chickens run all over, get diseases, etc., and they could very easily pen them up and get better, healthier chickens, better eggs and so on."

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I said, "All right." So I tried to figure out how to do something along those lines so an illiterate could understand it. I came up with a cartoon book, eight pages, a series called "Botyok," which means "Fatso." We created this Fatso farmer character with an intelligent wife and children. There was an agricultural agent to do the explaining. After some amusing things to get the interest of the reader, he would build a chicken house. On the back page we had, from U.S. Department of Agriculture materials or somewhere, an actual design, a very simple design of a chicken house built of bamboo. That thing caught on, the Philippine Government liked it, it went all over the place, and then it began to be picked up in other countries.

I had to explain, because another idea in my simple mind was a chicken was a chicken, wherever you found him. It was just the people and the culture that changed. So if the idea was right, then all our USIS office had to do in Thailand, for example, after checking with the proper authorities, would be have a local artist draw it with Thai costumes and tools. Well, that's what happened. So in Thailand, in Indonesia, and in Vietnam, and even in British Malaya, they picked this thing up.

My God, it was just going like crazy, when I got a letter from Charlie Arnot, Director of Press and Publications in Washington, very explicitly saying what in the hell did I think I was doing, the Agency wasn't in this business, and I was to stop it at once. So unhappily, I stopped it.

### RPC Expands

The first PAO conference was held at the end of 1950 in Baguio. I had this comic book I told you about earlier, "When the Communists Came." Our plant was based on one shift that was capable with the equipment we had of turning out 650,000 eight-and-a-half-by-eleven inch press impressions daily. Each post could draw upon those numbers allotted to them.

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I used the back of an envelope up there in Baguio, and got hold of these PAOs quietly by themselves. I asked them a simple question. I said, "Look, I know you're inhibited by your allotment of press impressions, but I would like to know that if you didn't have such inhibitions, what do you think you could really use?" After I got these numbers, I put them down and they were staggering.

So what to do? There was a guy at the conference from what was then called ECA, the AID program. His name was Leo Hockstedder. He was a very colorful, flamboyant character. And ECA had a lot of money compared to us. He was over in Saigon, but he was at our conference. I had lunch with him, and I said, "You know, Leo, you need a lot of printing, we've got the plant, all we have to do is enlarge it and we could handle a lot of your printing." He got up, went to the telephone. He came back and told me he had called Washington. To my astonishment, he said ECA had agreed to double our plant. So that's what happened. We did a lot of printing for them. Then eventually, ECA set up its own plant similar to ours in Manila. Later they turned it over to the Philippine Government, to turn out AID type materials.

Later, in 1972, I went to Manila when I was USIS Advisor to CINCPAC [Commander-in-Chief Pacific]. I went there for a SEATO conference on counterinsurgency. The Philippine Government provided high-level briefings. The guy in charge for the Philippine Government was Jose Crisol, Deputy Minister of Defense, my old cohort when he was working as chief of their counterinsurgency propaganda. He kept calling me the "Father of the RPC" to these delegates from Great Britain, Malaysia, Thailand and so on. It got to be a little embarrassing.

But the last thing on that score was in 1982. Ferdinand Marcos, President of the Philippines, came to Washington, his second visit in 17 years. Before coming—he had an English language weekly newspaper called the Philippine Monitor—he had 50,000 copies printed and flown into the U.S. on the government-owned Philippine Airlines, where they

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were distributed to key target people coast to coast among Philippine Americans to help Marcos gain American support for his one-man rule. (Laughs)

*Q: Before we go on to the next phase, I'd like to ask just a couple of questions. I ran into this problem from Washington, too, when I was in Thailand, having them cut off things that we were doing because, in their estimation, we weren't doing what USIS was supposed to do. I thought perhaps when you said that Brad Conners was having the first PAO conference . . . [Tape recorder turned off] While we had this machine turned off, you mentioned that you went to East Berlin and had a few experiences there that I think might be well to get on tape.*

### East Berlin/Europe

WILSON: I was assigned to Paris in 1953, part of a small team to bring Marshall Plan information people into USIS. I had a regional information officer job for Western Europe. At this time I set out from Berlin to tour the Iron Curtain as far as Turkey to interview escapees from Communist countries. I went over to East Berlin in 1953. This was before the Berlin Wall. I took the military bus tour. The Rosenberg trial was going on, and Stalin had just died. The ground around the statue to Stalin there was surrounded by a blanket of wreaths of flowers. On the walls of buildings, two or three stories high, were pictures of the Rosenbergs. The Communists were supporting a campaign against the upcoming execution. They had posters of Uncle Sam with electric chair teeth on all of the electric light poles.

But one point about that always got me, in the little village where we lived outside Paris, and where there were lots of Communists, all of a sudden, every telegraph pole had posters of this type. I was impressed with how the Russians could develop a theme and had the organization to carry out the same theme in different countries. Later at the Agency, I tried to pursue that from our side, without much success.

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One humorous thing. When I visited Rome, Clare Boothe Luce was the new ambassador. She had just made a speech which was the opposite, to my understanding, of our policy for Trieste. An old buddy of mine, a political officer from Manila, was political officer there. I stayed with him and he took me to a cocktail party where the burden of conversation was about her speech and the new lady ambassador.

The next day I went for a tour around USIS to get familiar with our office in Rome. They had another guy to take the tour with me. That was Henry Luce. (Laughs) He and I went along together learning about it.

Incidentally, I also was able to go to Beirut at the end of that Iron Curtain tour, just in time for the ambassador to throw the switch on the new RPC for that area, which was going to take care of the Middle East and Africa.

On August 1, 1953, the U.S. Information Agency was created, I think to the relief of many in the Department of State at that time. They still were uncomfortable with the propaganda aspect. On the other hand, the exchange of persons program and the cultural activities were retained. The Director of USIA was made responsible to the President through the National Security Council. They defined the new mission of the Agency, which I don't have to repeat here, I'm sure. From the wartime propaganda of World War II to the full and fair picture of when I was in Shanghai, to the Campaign of Truth under Harry Truman in the Cold War, they now had a list of objectives which were not summed up in any of those type of things.

### Psychological Indoctrination Program in Thailand

In Bangkok, Ambassador "Wild Bill" Donovan, the old head of the Office of Strategic Services, in the folding of OWI, was the ambassador. If there's ever a man who understood, in my opinion, how USIS should be used, he was one. At that time, in '53, the Communists had China, and the U.S. was still shocked at this. We were still at war

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in Korea. Thailand had the Chinese Communists on one border. Dien Bien Phu had just occurred, and so from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam itself, they had Communists over in that area. Up in the Shan Provinces of Burma, they had rebels there. Down on the southern border of Malaya, they had the “Emergency,” Communist insurrectionists there. They had Thai dissidents setting up a shadow government in China. In every way, this was a threatening situation. Ambassador Donovan recommended to President Eisenhower that they make a stand in Thailand, try to move from there back into some of these countries and to stop this onrush of Communism. It was agreed. Word went out. When I flew from Paris to Bangkok I found the Agency had brought in officers from all over the world including a lot of my old buddies. Jim Meader was the Director. John Henderson had been brought down from Japan.

*Q: Meader was the country director?*

WILSON: He was the Country Director. In Bangkok, they had built a new embassy building which had a nickname “the chicken house” from its appearance. USIS inherited the premises of the old embassy, which was a large wooden frame house. At my arrival, workmen were busily tearing out partitions for us to set this thing up. Meader got us all in the center of a big room. There was no conference room, no secure room at all. We had to draw our chairs close together and talk in whispers. The meeting was labeled top secret. He briefed us. He said we were to help stem the spread of Communism in Thailand, that the campaign had top priority, would be conducted on all fronts, with substantial economic and military assistance. Our role was psychological.

They were worried about the thousands of Vietnamese refugees in the northeast of Thailand, still a problem. So the question was: What to do? Our task was to educate the government and the people—you notice they say “the people”—of the dangers of Communism. There were no special instructions. We'd have to develop a plan. Money was no object. The government of Thailand agreed to cooperate, and this was a crash program. I didn't realize it, but we were making history, because this was the first effort

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of this kind for the U.S. government which would be repeated later in Vietnam and elsewhere.

We had become virtually the Thai Government information program, as later happened in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. So we pioneered in many of the techniques that were used extensively later in that war. The plan that emerged, we called the Psychological Indoctrination Program, for lack of a better name. It was a pyramid concept. We'd start at the top rungs of the military and government, giving a series of lectures and seminars to educate those people. They would then become instructors and conduct similar meetings, both at lower rungs of the ministries and out in the provinces. In this way, we hoped to penetrate those levels. They wanted to make the northeast a special area because of the Vietnamese; they felt many of them were still Communists. And we decided we would use traveling teams to hold meetings with the provincial governors, village officials, teachers, and priests to reach the masses, but most particular, those communicators within the masses.

So my job, as chief information officer, really, to support this massive effort was to develop media materials. One of my first acts was to send a cable to the Agency, asking them to assemble a photographic history of Communism. Now, this seemed like a simple request, but it turned out to be another Agency first. They took it seriously, and they made a major effort. It became known as Project 1016, which represented the number of photos they selected from worldwide sources.

In Bangkok, I was able to edit this material down. We spread the pictures out all over the place, and made a number of photo booklets and film strips, because we couldn't count on electricity, just have to use a battery for the film strips. The booklets, of course, were printed at RSC by the hundreds of thousands, and the film strips were produced by a film studio in Tokyo. We also used kerosene-burning film strip projectors. Then we assembled anti-Communist movies, including the one based on my old cartoon book, When the



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Communists Came, but with Thai language tracks. We planned to make ten original films in Thailand.

### Films in Thailand

The director of films for the Agency was Turner Shelton, later an ambassador, quite a colorful character, who whizzed into town and left on a rented airplane to go to Saigon. So there he was. I'll never forget it. It was a Sunday, and he was closeted with Jim Meader, going over details of this program. I was at a typewriter in the next room. They needed for this local film program three or four paragraphs of an outline for each film. They wanted to do ten films. So I'm sitting there writing the outlines for ten films. Later Shelton sent out a scriptwriter from Hollywood who wasn't of much help. I had to actually write the complete script for the first film which came out. It was a hectic time.

American experts prepared the main lecture outlines. I'll tell you briefly. The first ones were positive, discussing Thailand's national heritage, the King, the Buddhist religion, the natural beauty of the country, family system, history, culture, way of life, and asking the people to reflect on those points from their own life and how things were getting better.

Others followed about the nature, theory, strategy and tactics of Communism, the strategy of world domination by the Soviet Union, how they penetrated popular fronts. Then some discussion of the Communist military failures since the end of World War II in Greece, Korea, Burma, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, political failures in France, Italy, Germany, and Japan, and that the Communists had failed so far in Thailand, but they remained a threat.

So it was that general kind of an approach. They were written initially in English by experts. Those given to the very top level in the government, in English, were university-trained people. They, in turn, took the material, wrote it, not only in Thai language, but also

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with a Thai emphasis. So as they penetrated down, they were Thai, but with this backbone of solid information.

I want to say one thing on the living side. I found a very large home up the street from the embassy on Wireless Road, corner of Plonchit Road. It was diagonally across the road from the British Embassy. Lorane and the children came with our car and furniture. Quite a different life from Paris. Poisonous snakes were commonplace around there. The British ambassador, Sir Berkley Gage, took a shine to us. He had quarters on the upper level of his embassy he called Berkley Arms. He would invite some of his friends over after big functions, to go up there and have drinks. He would also invite us to play tennis. We became quite close with his press officer, Robin Hayden, and his wife. Our son, Robin, is named after him; he's his godfather. Robin went on up through the ranks, was spokesman for the foreign office at one point, and in his last job was ambassador to the Republic of Ireland. Now he's on the board of some major corporation in England. He's been made a sir, and his wife, Elizabeth, a lady. We saw them a year or two ago in London. It was just like we'd left them in Berkley Arms the day before.

USIS, in addition to doing this large indoctrination program, was doing a more or less normal program. We put out a weekly newspaper, a monthly magazine, a Thai Free World. We did radio shows, newsreels, and other media efforts, with our printing done over at RPC.

I flew to RPC for consultation on Pan American. Right in front of us, by an hour, was a Cathay Pacific flight. A Communist fighter plane came out of Hainan island and shot down the Cathay Pacific plane. When I landed at Hong Kong and went to the lobby of the Peninsula Hotel, people were more upset and excited than any previous time. Hong Kong was usually a pretty cool place. I ran into an old friend of mine from my Shanghai days, "Mo" Cutburth, who was very upset because his partner and buddy, with his wife and two children, were on that downed plane. Mo had landed many times in Hainan—he used to fly for CNAC—and volunteered to fly over to look for any survivors. He and I went around

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Hong Kong in a taxi. We saw different people that had been picked up. We went to the consulate, and came to the conclusion that the rest of the passengers had died.

When I left to go back to Bangkok, I flew Air France. There was only one other passenger, an Indian merchant. We were going to Haiphong. As we got closer, I noticed the stewardess was taking brandy up to the cockpit! I ordered some, too, and so that was my first trip to Haiphong, and then on down to Saigon.

Just a couple of quick anecdotes. We were establishing Thai branch posts. One of them was at Udorn in the northeast. We would have one American officer at these places. I went there and to the others. I met an educational official at Udorn. He was driving down to the Mekong to cremate his brother. He invited me to go with him in his Land Rover. The roads were corduroy, with Poles laid over them. In Udorn, incidentally, there was only one other Westerner besides Jim Markey, our BPAO, and with myself made three. In later days, there were thousands of American troops there.

*Q: We had an airfield up there later.*

WILSON: Right. The red dust was terrible. Markey had an office over a store. Dust would come through the windows. I still have a Laotian parachutist's red beret Jim gave me to wear against the dust. That area was remote and primitive is what I'm trying to say.

### Mobile Teams Sent Out to Rural Villages

Our mobile teams were getting under way, and it was really like a military operation. Logistics were very important. We used elephants and helicopters and planes, but mainly it was jeeps. We sent one American who was instructed to be unobtrusive, the rest was a Thai operation. One of the products that we had that's interesting was a picture of the King and the other was a picture of the Emerald Buddha, their most holy religious object. There were stacks of these things pre-positioned. Then at a given time, the governor, for example, would give our pictures of the King, the local abbot would hand out pictures of

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the Buddha. Then because the house and shops had open fronts, in a few days we could go through these villages and see those pictures framed, hanging in every single one. It was successful from that point of view.

People would come from miles around to see our movies at night. Then we developed anti-Communist themes for songs of the native Mohlam singers. These singers would go on until 2:00 or 3:00 o'clock in the morning, I'm telling you, with thousands of people sitting around on the ground. So that was successful and later on adopted in Vietnam and elsewhere.

I went on one trip on a jeep through the jungle with the governor of the province to where Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand come together. After attending a service at the abbot's temple, where I did a sketch he passed around which I later gave him. He hung it up in my quarters. I was flown out by helicopter the next day. It had taken us a long time to get through the jungle, following elephant trails at times to get to this place. We got out quickly in one of those small helicopters, seating side by side; a pilot, a mechanic, and myself, three of us. I found the seatbelt didn't work. I almost fell out of the damn thing when it jumped up in the air.

This indoctrination program was a massive pioneering effort when I left in 1955.

A major anti-Communist move by the U.S. during my time in Bangkok was the formation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, SEATO. John Foster Dulles came out to sign it. To show the treaty had teeth, they sent a naval task force over, and in record time they launched more aircraft from a carrier than had been done since the Korean War.

I took a press group to a carrier. These Thai reporters found the escalator on the aircraft carrier was the most intriguing thing as there were none in Thailand. A commodore commanding the destroyers got drunk at a cocktail party where there were a lot of Thai officials. I managed to extract him from the party to my house, put him to bed. I had to go to work the next day. For three days he kept coming back. My wife didn't know what to do

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with him. But before he sailed away, he sent over a crate of frozen steaks and some fresh lettuce, which we all enjoyed very much. Later, in 1970, when I went to the faculty of the National War College in the research section, a Navy captain in charge looked at me and said, "I know you. You saved my career."

I said, "I did?" Turns out he was the captain in command of the ship on which the commodore was based. This commodore, an alcoholic, gave him a lot of trouble because of his drinking.

*Q: The other tape ran out, and we had a little trouble finding out just where we were, so Earl is going to start again with his story about the trade fair in Bangkok while he was there.*

### First U.S. Trade Fair/Bangkok

WILSON: I was telling how the U.S. suddenly decided to participate in their first trade fair facing off the Russians. I suggested we have Cinemascope—new at the time. We built an outdoor theater and it was a great success.

One other aspect of that trade fair. I thought we should have an anti-Communist exhibit. It was attributed to the police. It sounds kind of corny, but I had them make a papier-mache spider hanging from the ceiling with a big spider web, and a map of Asia on the walls around the web. I got Communist materials from many of these countries. The idea was to show that just as in Thailand, there were similar Communist themes and materials in each country. Then from Korea I got a whip made of barbed wire that came from one of the prisons made by Communist prisoners to whip some of the other prisoners. Also we had a Korean flag covered with hundreds of signatures in blood of Korean soldiers pledging to defend their country. As I said, it was corny, but at least the place was crowded with people all the time.

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We left Bangkok in 1955 on a small British coastal freighter that had a deck-load of water buffaloes. There were only two state rooms. Lorane had one with our four children. I had the other with our poodle, Caprice. At sea, we learned of the death of Ambassador Peurifoy. He had bought the Thunderbird sports car, brought out for exhibition at the fair. In driving it over a one-way bridge, he hit head-on into a truck. He and his son were both killed.

### Policy Planning at USIA

In 1955, I went to Washington. Jim Meader now was in charge of the Far East. He wanted me as his deputy, but I didn't want that job, although I liked Jim. The Agency had just established a small policy planning staff. The man in charge was Mickey Boerner. He had been a National War College student, had come to Thailand, where Jim Meader was sick, and I had the task of explaining our psychological program to the group. So when Mickey founded the policy planning staff, he wanted somebody with Far Eastern experience. I was the Far East guy. There were only about five of us. So there we were, sitting up there in IOP near the director's office, and we really had no power to speak of. The most interesting thing was that we did get country plans and papers from all over the world, and they had all the top-secret papers stored nearby. So I got a pretty good idea of what was going on in the field.

One guy who sat across from me was Bill Bourne, ex-newspaperman, a southerner, very intelligent. He was supposed to be in charge of science. I didn't get any impression he had any science background, but anyhow, Bill was the one who told me about the possibility of the Russians putting a satellite in space. At lunchtime, he and I would worry about this. We both were equally uninformed, thought it would be like a basketball whizzing around in space where it could be seen, thinking of the impression on the masses. We tried to get the Agency to pay some attention, no way could we get anybody interested in that thing. As far as I know, we were the only two worrying about it.

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*Q: What year was that now? How long before the satellite actually went up?*

WILSON: 1955. I can't remember the year Sputnik went up, but it wasn't so terribly long after that.

### Tie Reports

Frank Dennis was assistant managing editor of the Washington Post. He had hired me there as a copy boy. He had been in Paris with the Marshall Plan, and he was now director for policy and plans. I went to him one day, and I told him that after being there a while, I was absolutely astonished at something. He said, "What's that?"

I said, "We're supposed to be in the business of communicating, and as far as I can see, we have absolutely no way of communicating ideas among ourselves. You send out some messages from time to time, but it's totally inadequate." I said, "We should have some kind of publication to collect and disseminate these new useful ideas."

He told me, "Okay, you do it." With this mass of paper coming over my desk, within a week or so I extracted 50 ideas that I thought were good, then I came up with something I called "TIE Reports," for Technical Information Exchange. I couldn't think of anything better. Three things happened. First, this initial bunch of 50 TIE reports—and I did this deliberately—bogged down the mailroom. There was a lot of bitching about all this stuff going out in one day. Second, each post, in their response, were uniformly irate, "Why this great mass of paper, especially when we've been doing this approach, or that one, for years?" But third, at least one or more of the ideas were incorporated by 95% of the posts. I kept a record and a map of these. It was impressive.

*Q: Despite all their bitching, they subsequently took one or another of these ideas and put them into effect.*

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WILSON: Absolutely. This is my reaction over the years to new ideas: they have to go through a defense mechanism before working their way down to any kind of acceptance.

### Status of Women

About this time, President Eisenhower created the People to People program with 33 committees representing all kinds of organizations, the handicapped, doctors, lawyers, etc. They called the chairmen to the White House—we're still in '55—to inaugurate this program and to give it some prestige. One of these was a woman representing women's clubs. She very smartly marched over to the Agency, got an appointment with the director, and said before she went to work, she wanted to know what the Agency was doing about matters of interest to women. The fact is, we were doing little or nothing.

*Q: Was Ted Streibert the director at that time?*

WILSON: I think so. The problem sifted down from the director to me. I was supposed to look after it.

I found the United Nations Committee on the Status of Women earlier had focused on getting the vote for women in the astonishing number of countries in the world where it had been denied. By now, 1955, this goal had largely been attained, so now that group was concentrating on getting the women out to vote and trying to help them understand how to use their voting power to bring change. Of course, the League of Women's Voters was very active abroad. They were working with women's groups all over the world.

What struck me, the more I thought about it, these women and their groups were actively trying to promote change, democracy, peaceful change, as we called it, and so were the labor attaches, but others were dragging their heels more often than not. Change produced problems.



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The Agency had developed, by now, the so-called target groups. When I suggested the addition of women, it drew a lot of smiles and smirks. And then, when I mentioned women's affairs, which is what they called it, this got an even worse male reaction. The official line was that in the list of targets, military, educators, government officials, etc., they already included women if the women in such a group had prominence or importance. It was only much later that the Agency installed a women's affairs officer in its policy section.

### Global Psychological Objectives

One thing the Agency had at that time were what they called global psychological objectives. These were secret. Each USIS post was required to write a country plan based on these global objectives, but tailored to their local situation. Country plans were for use only by the executive branch and were not available to Congress. Then in the country plan, each post, under its psychological objectives, stemming from the global ones, would list its programs, budgeting, target audience, etc., and the media products.

I was assigned to write the global psychological objectives on anti-Communism and pro-democracy. The latter were largely platitudes expressed in government jargon, and this began to bother me. I had had a little previous experience with country plans, and now I was buried in them. As I read them, I could get a feel for a vast outpouring of negative anti-Communist materials in the Cold War. Whether it was accomplishing anything, we had no way of knowing, but our heart was in it. This was something you could get your teeth into. But we were much less sure-footed in the positive development of democracy. We had our containment policy and then the military shields, but we were supporting many authoritarian figures, giving military and economic aid to strengthen these regimes, and off in the future it was hoped some day as these bastions became secure and prosperous, we could hope for democratic and representative governments to emerge.

In the meantime, we would talk about support of our foreign policy, our military strength, our economic assistance, and America's history and way of life. Little was said of human

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rights in any context. So I had to conclude if the promotion of democracy abroad was one of our stated major objectives, as far as I was concerned, we were not doing a good job.

### Citizenship Education Program

But in the spring of 1956, I came upon something I thought could change all this, and this is an interesting story that I don't think many people know much about. I'd like to tell it. USIA Director Ted Streibert had been sent a memorandum by Dr. William Russell, the International Cooperation Agency—that's the aid program of that day—Deputy Director for Education. He had worldwide ICA responsibilities in this field, and he wanted to discuss a program idea with Streibert. But it was brushed aside, and I was given the assignment to go over and see Dr. Russell and find out what he wanted to talk about.

His office was near the White House, and I went over. He looked like what he was—an educator. He had previously been Dean of Teachers College, Columbia University. He was gray-haired, slightly balding, rimless glasses, with a very quiet, effective way of communicating information. He said first he wanted to give me some background. Dwight Eisenhower, retired former military commander in Europe, was now President of Columbia University. There, meeting with the faculty, he told them he was convinced, based on his military experience, our schools had to do a better job of teaching American democratic concepts to our youth.

Russell, who was an expert on the teaching of citizenship, had evolved some very specific ideas on this subject which he discussed with Eisenhower. He said, "We need money." Eisenhower liked his ideas. With Ike's popularity, soon to be President of the United States, several million dollars came from the Carnegie Corporation to develop Russell's ideas.

So Russell set up a special staff at Teachers College for what came to be called the Citizenship Education Project, or CEP, for short. With the help of a number of political scientists, economists, historians, and others, they formulated a list of the Premises

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of American Liberty. These were under four headings: the free individual, the free government, the free economy, and the free world. They were saying that although democracy is open-ended, they needed a listing to know what it was they were trying to communicate to students.

To back this up, he got some of the top librarians to prepare a comprehensive reference list in support of each of these premises. These were excerpts from books, poems, plays, films, and other information designed to enable a deeper study and to illustrate the promise and struggle of unfinished business. All this had been reduced to a card file as a teacher's aide in a box—about the size of a shoe box—full of cards with dividers on these different topics.

He explained that, for example, if there was an election to take place and the teacher wanted, for example, to emphasize to the students, in a democracy a citizen's responsibility to vote, one of the premises, the reference list would very quickly help identify pertinent materials from the days of the early Greeks to contemporary times. He said this was the intellectual half of this approach.

The other half dealt with action. He and his staff concluded that there were many things young people could do through action to gain a better understanding of a given premise, even though they had not yet reached voting majority age. These actions were called laboratory practices. They felt you could think of the community as a laboratory. So in the classroom, discussing a premise, the students could develop their own laboratory practices to get out and help understand its application in real life. He said, for example, using that election thing, the kids could get material from the League of Women Voters, urging citizens to register and vote, they could have a project to distribute this as volunteers from door to door, they could maybe go baby sit to enable a couple to go to the polls, they could do a variety of things. Later, they could compare their experiences which might show voter apathy, among other things, and various other problems.

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Russell said, after they did all this, they took it to the field. They had developed several hundred laboratory practices, and went around the country to both explain the technique and to have schools try to imitate the practices or come up with their own. Then they made surveys which revealed that students who had undergone this had a significantly increased understanding of democratic theory and practices. It began to be adopted by many U.S. school systems.

He told me, after he took this job at ICA dealing with education abroad, he began to wonder what foreign educators and educational systems were doing to promote democracy in their countries. Then he began to wonder further if maybe through an adaptation, this CEP technique could be used somewhere else. But when he approached the authorities of ICA, they would have none of it; this was propaganda, and they weren't in that business. They were like hard-nosed bankers, and they didn't want anything to do with propaganda. That belonged over there in USIA or somewhere.

Russell told me that despite this, he was able to quietly—this is good bureaucracy—to set up a pilot project because he had some budget money available to him right there in Washington. This is what he really wanted to talk to Streibert about. He said it came about as a fluke, because he was a personal friend of Eisenhower's, stemming from his days at Columbia. He had been invited to the White House when the new Guatemalan president, Castillo Armas, was there. Guatemala being at that time the only country that had thrown the Communists out, as it came out later, with the help of the CIA.

Castillo Armas said they wanted to build democracy. Eisenhower said, "Talk to Russell." Russell explained his new ideas to Armas, who was enthusiastic, said he had been groping for ideas. He agreed to personally select six prominent Guatemalan educators to work with American specialists to adapt this to his country. So two professors from the CEP staff at Teachers College of Columbia went to Guatemala on an ICA grant. This is where Russell was able to finance them.

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Using the format of the American premises of liberty (which, incidentally, were distributed by the many, many thousands in this country and without ever any criticism), they produced the Guatemalan premises of freedom, supported by quotations from the Guatemalan Constitution and other historic documents.

Then he told me, having done that, the Guatemalan educators were at that moment at Columbia University working with CEP people there on another grant, where they were observing the American laboratory practices and, from those, developing laboratory practices for Guatemala. Then the next step, they were going to print this material in Spanish, and have a major workshop in Guatemala City for secondary schoolteachers from all over the country to come and learn the process. This would be followed with actual classroom use. They'd be teaching democratic ideas all over the country.

On the wall of his office Russell had a Letter of Commendation from Eisenhower about the project. But Russell said he had decided he couldn't be one man fighting the government, and that USIA should be the proper agency to follow up on this experiment with foreign countries.

He had these two card files on his desk, in one the Premises of Liberty material, in the other, cards covering various laboratory practices. These latter, as I say, were open-ended. Students and teachers could always make up their own. Dr. Russell wanted me to take them, but it was Friday, I was on my way home. I said, "No, I'll pick them up. I'll come by here Monday." I went home, and the more I thought about this, the more excited I got, because I thought here is a way to advance democratic ideas in different countries within the context of their own history and culture. It would give focus, and we could be thinking generations ahead.

On Monday, I went back to his office. To my dismay, I found over the weekend the poor man had died of a heart attack.

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Q: *Oh, my God.*

WILSON: His office was sealed, but I could see through the open door the two boxes on his desk. When the secretary left her desk for a moment, I went in, scooped them up, and took them to the Agency. I said to myself, "The man gave them to me. I don't feel guilty." He meant that I should have them, and perhaps that was fate.

### Trying to Promote CEP in the Agency

As you know, getting a new idea accepted in government is a formidable task. The best way is to have the idea originate at the top, have the top person's backing. In this I failed. Also, my immediate boss, head of the policy planning staff, Mickey Boerner, wasn't interested. He gave a brief two- or three-minute report at the directors' weekly senior staff conference. I was made Agency CEP project follow-up officer for anything that might be required, and that was that. I thought how it all might have changed if Russell had lived and had the ear of Eisenhower.

But, if you can't penetrate the top, then the best thing is to try to build acceptance at the lower and middle levels, and use that as a lever to reach the top. I also knew the Agency was divided into a number of fiefdoms—deputy directors for policy administration, geographic areas of the world, media, information service, etc., and that was one level of approach. Another was out in the field with the PAOs.

So I began making the rounds of the Agency, lugging these two shoe boxes—people began to make fun of me—trying to compress this background into a short period of time. I did gain a few adherents, but no one with any real clout. I wrote a background paper on the project and managed to get it cleared. I also got the agency to buy—I don't think any of them knew what was happening—60 sets of the card files. I had these sent out to the posts. I hoped then we would be able to promote workshops in the field, but that didn't happen. I was unsuccessful with that.

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I knew without those workshops in the field, nothing much would happen, the boxes would wind up in a storeroom somewhere, or in a library. I did promote a field trip to Rio and to Mexico City to discuss the matter. USIS reaction in Rio was without enthusiasm, though several of the ICA officers involved with education were quite interested, but nothing came of that. The same was true in Mexico City.

I managed a trip to New York, where I met Dr. Bill Vincent, who was now the Executive Director of the Citizenship Education Project at Teachers College. We became friends. I met members of his staff and the Guatemalan professors who were still working there. Their work was about complete. they were getting ready for this first CEP workshop in Guatemala. Vincent was very pleased at what I was trying to do, and to have a CEP advocate in the Agency. He promised to keep me unofficially abreast of developments.

And sure enough, a few months later he sent me a copy of an ICA report, which is required at the termination of any grant. It was entitled "An Experiment in the Teaching of Freedom," prepared by Teachers College. It covered the CEP background, the Guatemalan experiment. ICA's chief of education then wrote, in part, "This document reports a program that is experimental, yet the main procedures described here can probably be applied in most countries participating in the technical cooperation plan. If so, then we have here a means for meeting a necessary and significant need, namely, a need that all free countries have to strengthen an understanding of freedom among their own people." I was delighted with this. I had the report distributed to all U.S. government agencies involved with foreign affairs, thinking somebody would respond, but I was wrong. Official Washington, including USIA, paid no attention.

Then in 1957, the President of Guatemala, Castillo Armas, was assassinated. His personal backing was lost. The new regime made changes in the Minister of Education. The Guatemalan CEP team was broken up, assigned to other duties. The ICA specialist was transferred. This experiment, which I thought so bright with promise, withered away.

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There was only one faint spark among the dying embers: that year, the new Korea country plan crossed my desk. This is 1956. It was a product of the new Korean Public Affairs Officer, Hank Arnold. Hank had been a member of the Policy Planning staff. He and I often had lunch together, at which I often discussed CEP with him. He always completely disagreed with me. He could find every reason to be against my approach.

*Q: I was going to say, I would have been surprised if Hank Arnold had been a wild advocate.*

WILSON: But somewhere along the line, he changed his mind, and CEP was now an important part of the new Korean country plan. As the first step of implementation, the post was using the card files I had sent out as a reference to order a wide range of American books and publications on citizenship, human rights, and democracy. These were going to be reviewed there, and many of them were to be translated into Korean for use in their program.

### Mexico Assignment

In 1957, we headed for Mexico City, my fifth post. Jack McDermott was the Public Affairs Officer. I was to be Chief Information Officer, later Deputy PAO. Again, there was no time for language study. I was delighted to go to Mexico. When I got there, I found the post had its own soap operas, radio, and their own unattributed newsreel. They had a Labor Information Officer, something fairly new, working closely with the labor attache, who later became the ambassador to Korea. USIS was putting out newsletters, had mobile film units going around the country, had an unattributed weekly newspaper, news bulletins, many pamphlets and media products.

Soon after I arrived, it happened to be time for the annual update of the USIS country plan. I was asked to rewrite it. In this document, as in many that I had read in Washington, it had the usual anti-Communist and pro-democracy objectives. I noticed the post had singled



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out Mexican secondary schoolteachers as a key target audience, a group the Communists were actively courting. They were influential, as they reached millions of Mexican school kids. The post, earlier, had started a magazine called *Saber*—"to know," for the teachers. It specialized in articles on the American educational system relevant to Mexico. It was well established, and through surveys they learned it had a very excellent reputation among educators. So I saw this as a golden opportunity for this Citizenship Education Project.

I wrote a memo to Jack McDermott, suggesting how I thought we could write this project into the country plan. I thought we ought to do it in two phases. The first phase would be the basic outline of the American premises of liberty, with a cross-relationship between that and what we could find in the Mexican Constitution, following the same path as the Guatemalan experiment. We would develop a Mexican equivalent with laboratory practices based on the free individual, free government, free economy, and free world for Mexico. It seemed to me that this would be a way to go. We'd write these things first as pamphlets, distribute them as a supplement to our magazine. We could also run some articles in the magazine about the American experience.

Phase two, as I saw it, was from these pamphlets, if favorable, under our exchange of persons program to bring down some experts from Teachers College to have a workshop on the technique, as they did in Guatemala, and work with the Mexican educators. And from that, to use the pamphlets as a base for developing a textbook based on this whole thing for use in the school system down there. I thought, also, in my own mind that if we were successful in Mexico, we could influence Washington and through Washington, the rest of the world. But I was aware that it was a very sensitive project and would have to be completely unclassified because I had to have local staff working with it. I also knew that if anywhere down the line any Mexicans of any influence objected, we'd have to stop it.

Anyhow, although I don't think Jack, frankly, understood the idea at all, he okayed it, nor do I think Ambassador Robert C. Hill understood it or cared about it. But they all signed off on it, and the country plan went to Washington.

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The editor of the magazine *Saber* was a former Mexican schoolteacher, a woman called Luz Zea, highly intelligent, well informed. When I explained the whole thing to her, she at first was very nationalistically suspicious. But then as she began to learn more about it, she became enthusiastic.

### First CEP Pamphlet

So we started moving ahead, just the two of us, Luz and myself, working to develop the pamphlets, one at a time. I would write some, she'd write some, I'd edit, she'd edit, and finally, our first pamphlet on the theme of the free individual based on premises from the Mexican Constitution, etc., came out, called *Senderos de Libertad*, meaning "paths of liberty." We sent that out to all of these schoolteachers as an accompaniment to our magazine, then sat back to wait reaction. The feedback was very, very interesting. In the past I had sent out thousands and thousands of things around Asia with a certain amount of feedback. This time there was a difference. Here we were dealing with ideas on the Mexican level, and they could do something about some of these ideas right in their classroom. To my astonishment, we received a ton of letters. It really was something, all addressed to the editor of the magazine *Saber*, praising the pamphlet, asking for additional copies, and we didn't get a single one that objected, which I had been afraid of.

I reported this success to Bill Vincent at Teachers College, unofficially. His response was enthusiastic. He recommended two important things should be done. Of course, he wasn't a bureaucrat. Here's what he said: "First, this program should be brought forcefully to the attention of top government officials concerned with education as an instrument of foreign policy. You should be called to Washington to report to the proper board or committee to strengthen top levels of support for efforts of this kind.

Second, you should meet with information officers in ICA and education division chiefs throughout Latin America to explain the step-by-step process you went through in developing the Mexican program. The report on the Guatemalan experiment, your

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Mexican materials, plus your story should constitute a very strong argument in favor of careful investigation of the possibility of similar programs in all Latin American countries.” And he asked me to let him know if he could help. I was never called to Washington to discuss any of this, nor was I sent anywhere in Latin American to try to do anything about it.

### Development of RSC/Mexico

In 1958, there was a hell of an earthquake in Mexico City. We were living out in the San Angel region, which wasn't affected. We went downtown because I understood the embassy was badly damaged. Mexico City is built on a lake. In an earthquake, some places get it worse than others. When we got down there, the elevators were bent out of order. My wife and I walked up 16 stories to my office. There was a piece of wall out behind my desk you could drive a car through. It had fallen on my desk. But with all, the quake had happened early in the morning hours, and not many people were hurt. We got everything organized pretty quickly.

But one of the main things in a little building next door to the embassy, where we had the USIS printing section, the ceiling fell in. That gave me an opportunity to get that little print shop converted to a regional production center for all Latin America.

I got hold of my old friend Ken Sayre from Manila days at RSC. He knew where there was a new uncrated Harris offset press left over, surplus, from the Air Force's Korean PSYWAR operations. The Agency had, in fact, looked at development of an RSC for the area twice, had carefully studied the possibility of setting up such an operation in Panama on the Manila model. The sticking point had been geography, the long distances for shipping down the east and west coasts of Latin America. I suggested they reopen the subject and pursue it a different way.

I said we didn't have to ship finished printed material to these posts. We could air mail lithographic negatives or aluminum plates complete with typeset text, art, and photos

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for contract printing, at a post from stockpile paper, which we would provide in advance. Unlike the Far East, the Middle East, Latin America, except for Brazil, was blessed with a common language. The Agency bought the idea, we got the press, got better space. It was called at first the Graphics Servicing Center, and it became the RSC for Latin America.

We had a Mexican creative genius, I think, Dan Nunez, there, and in the first ten months, a million and a half pamphlets and periodicals were shipped to other Latin American posts, and the numbers began to climb. We refined it to allow four large posts, Caracas, Lima, B.A., and Montevideo, act as sub-centers, print copies from plates supplied by us for smaller adjoining USIS posts. That RSC in Mexico is still going strong today in 1988.

### Bases of Freedom: CEP in Variant Forms Rekindles - Then Dies

To go back to December 1957, I got a letter from a friend of mine at the Agency, and he sent me what was a bootlegged copy of an Agency paper. At first glance, it appeared to me that they had been responsive to what I had been urging in the past. It was supposed to be the development of a positive ideological program, and it was called "Bases of Freedom." But what happened is a little convoluted. My friend provided some background. Over in the Pentagon, a fellow by the name of John Broger, who had been former president of the Far East Broadcasting Company in Manila, had developed an anti-Communist program for developing pro-democratic tendencies, which he called Militant Liberty. A central premise of his program was that the Communists knew what they believed and could explain it, while our side was incoherent and lacked the verbal ability to explain and defend liberty. He had a list of democratic rights and responsibilities. He had an assessment chart, so country by country, you could go through and list these things the way the State Department does human rights country reports today. You could draw up a list of violations. He wanted to develop training centers in various countries around the world; to take the trainees and insert them into labor unions and such as persuasive advocates of democracy.

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Broger, in his program, came to the favorable attention of the Secretary of Defense, Charlie Wilson, so that Broger was appointed as a consultant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. From this high level base militant liberty was brought it to the attention of the Department of State and USIA. It produced a strong negative response. The military wanted to know, if they objected, why? Spell it out. They wanted to know just what USIA was doing in the ideological field for the systematic promotion of an understanding of human rights and democratic ideals. USIA had no ready answer. They had to come up with something. The result was this paper bootlegged to me.

The Agency said it was a draft project. I could see in order to maintain control, they were sending it only to a few selected USIS posts for their reaction. Well, of course, I read this paper with great interest. First of all, I noted at the very beginning, 17 years after the end of World War II, and in the midst of the Cold War, USIA was defining "the problem." The problem was, in addition to exposing the threat of Communism, that USIA had to develop "a positive ideological program which would dramatically demonstrate what the United States is for, as well as by instinct and training, what we are against."

In the background, they briefly described Military Liberty and CEP. They said that Militant Liberty had ~"important advocates~" in Washington. That was shorthand meaning the Chairman of the JCS and the Secretary of Defense. They said a thorough study would be made by the Agency of both CEP, Premises of Liberty and Militant Liberty, and USIA, from the two, would draw up its own list of human rights and democratic ideals, which they would call Bases of Freedom: An Approach to an American Ideology.

Then they had a lot of caveats. They were not out to sell any of these ideals abroad. They were sending out a special book collection of 100 titles to be called the Freedom Bookshelf for USIS libraries. Most posts would not be able to do anything more. However, in some places, they could evaluate what might be a first step. The first step could be for use in American schools overseas or in Western-oriented school systems abroad. For that purpose, they were sending out the CEP card files that I'd sent out a few years earlier, and

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by now, two books, one called *The Premises of Liberty*, and *When Men Are Free*, that was Houghton-Mifflin, 1955, and the *Laboratory Practice Technique Resources for Citizenship*, published by Teachers College, Columbia, 1955. They were sending those out for possible use in schools of that type.

The second possibility would be in countries where Ministries of Education could be persuaded to introduce the teaching of citizenship in the whole school system, in which case the Bases of Freedom lists to be developed could be used as a model. They also said that posts would be furnished with copies of the Guatemala experiment, the CEP materials that I had produced in Mexico, and also the possibility of educators going to the CEP office at Teachers College. PAOs were warned to be careful not to exert pressure in offering American techniques. They finally wound up saying that it would be good if they could have a logical approach as it gave flexibility and so on.

They said there was a lot the Agency could do to back this effort by focusing media products on the themes, research by the Agency, and they said they would adopt enough of these two approaches to make a difference. I never saw any response to this paper, and I thought it had died. Then I found it hadn't.

In the fall of 1958, the Agency, in a brief paper to the posts, indicated that *Militant Liberty* in its totality had been laid to rest. I could see they were letting CEP wither on the vine. The Agency sidestepped the tricky business of developing its own listing of American ideology. So in brief, that whole project once again, from an Agency point of view, quietly went down the drain.

Continuation of interview: October 21, 1988

WILSON: In 1957, I was transferred to Mexico City as Information Officer. Ambassador Robert Hill was there at that time. He ran the embassy as though he were running for office in the United States.

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One thing that happened in Mexico right away, I got involved with diving for old Spanish ships in the Caribbean, because American gold hunters were coming down and the Mexican Government was afraid they would steal their national treasures. Out of that, we got an organization together called CEDAM, which enabled Mexicans and Americans to work together. That goes on to this very day, and they have now quite a connection with a variety of museums. They have three to four expeditions a year. I wrote a little book about it, gave a copy to the Agency library. It's called *The Mexican Caribbean: Twenty Years of Underwater Exploration*. Teaching English by TV

The USIS program in Mexico was the largest in the Western hemisphere. Our Benjamin Franklin Library was the largest in Latin America. The Binational Institute was the largest. English teaching was a very important activity.

TV was just coming into use in a very small, very experimental way within the Agency. I noticed in the fall of 1957—I'd been promoted to Deputy PAO—that the Binational Center English classes in Mexico City, without any advertising, had lines of applicants formed around the block. They signed up 5,000 and turned away another 5,000. About this time, the Agency contacted us about trying to develop TV programs. They didn't have very clear ideas, and such as they had, I didn't personally think were very applicable. So I had a thought. Why not try to do English language teaching over TV with the materials we used in the Binational Center, and just take it from there? As usual, everybody said it wouldn't work.

Fortunately, a man, Don Amelio Azcarraga, was "Mr. TV" of Mexico. He was the head of Televiscentro. Ambassador Hill knew him and introduced me. I became a great fan of his. He was pro-American, born in Texas, he loved to tease the gringos. He and I became friends. Years afterwards when he would come to Spain when I was there, we'd get together. He had one of the biggest offices I'd ever seen at the time. He didn't have a very high opinion of American TV. He said in a hospital bed in New York, when he had minor surgery, he had watched TV and counted the murders, which came to some large number

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over a one-day period. Anyhow, he helped us, and assigned one of his top directors. I was fortunate that I had some very bright young officers. One was Allen Hansen, who has written a book about the Agency's activities recently (which is now in process of being updated), and later Dan Garcia. I had them work with me on this project.

We also developed a book to go with the program, and various control methods to try to test it. For the actual program, we had an English teacher provided by the Institute, and we had a class of 15 selected students. These textbooks had to be purchased by the viewers. The program didn't require a textbook, but it was useful. So we were ready to go, and we needed money. Our budget for three one-hour experimental programs for three months was \$6,688. We were not able to find a sponsor. The trouble was, companies didn't want to be too closely identified with the gringos, even though they liked the idea.

So I proposed to the Agency that they approach the People to People foundation or some other foundation to get us some money. On January 30, 1958, the Agency came back and said, "No Agency funds available. Possibility of other support from other sources negligible. Suggest you determine priority project in relation other activities and reprogram within present resources if importance justifies curtailment elsewhere." We tried going through the back door to the Agency, to get enough money to experiment with, and eventually we were able to get a little bit.

Our first program went on the air on September 1, 1958, Monday evening, prime time, 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. We had decided on three one-half-hour live programs for 12 weeks. An early indicator of success was we sold 4,000 textbooks even before the program started. We didn't have enough money to make a kinescope to send to other posts. We informed the Agency that these prints would cost \$16 each, and we had to wring that money out of the Agency.

Then we got a report, after we had been operating a bit, that the program had received the highest rating for its time slot in Mexican TV history. Tests had convinced the skeptics of



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the program's pedagogical worth. We were over the hump. Other posts in Latin American began to line up. The Agency made similar programs in other languages a major project, and TV ratings began to soar for this type of thing. One of the very top places was in Japan.

Based on my time in Manila and the development of the RPC out there and general performance of various things, including a cartoon feature called "You Should Know,"—drawn somewhat like the old Ripley thing—with an anti-Communist slant, as well as other interesting facts, for a time became the most widely read cartoon in the world. So I was nominated for a Superior Service Award, just as the award system was eliminated. But later, on the basis of this, I was awarded a Meritorious Service Award which also included the Mexican adaptation of the CEP and the English language TV program.

### Promotion Panel

Lew, here's a little thing that you've probably forgotten. In 1959, I was called to Washington to be on a promotion panel. I was very much impressed with the whole procedure, the quality of our offices and so on. When it was over, I wrote an article on this subject in which I noted the difference between our organization and State. At that time we did not have a legal authority for selection out. The State's public members were not allowed a vote, whereas ours were, and other things of that nature.

I submitted this article for clearance and I got a stinging turn-down from the Agency's assistant director of personnel. He questioned my motives, my writing ability, my accuracy, in what I regarded as insulting language. Lew Schmidt, who is sitting here now, was then acting Latin American director. I wrote a letter to Lew, told him what I thought of these remarks, and suggested he read the article and deep-six it in the trash after he had finished. I just wanted him to be aware of this thing.

Lew sent the article, he wrote me, to the Agency Assistant Director for Policy, Bill Weathersby, for review. Bill later sent me a reply that he had written back to Lew, in which

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he said he wasn't eager to push publicity on the panel procedures. He said the "transition had required us to put the geese, ducks, and turkeys in the same barnyard, and he didn't want to make a noise about it except when required officially, and therefore why not follow Earl's suggestion and deep-six the article." Lew, that's what was done. (Laughs)

### CEP Survey

Back to the Citizenship Education Project. The Mexican employee magazine editor, Luz, and myself, just the two of us were quietly developing these pamphlets. We got many favorable letters, but I wanted an independent judgment, and arranged a nationwide survey in Mexico, which was conducted by International Research Associates. They sampled 598 teachers throughout Mexico. We were gratified. The overwhelming majority did not question our motives, which had me a little nervous. Response was favorable: practical value in their work, high level of interest, etc.

In the Agency, Oren Stephens was responsible for the Office of Research and Analysis. He was a friend of mine. I sent him this survey. He wrote back he was personally impressed, and that it was his intention to bring up this CEP adaptation at the Directors' Senior Staff meeting the coming week. He planned to review the whole thing, the history in the Agency, my frustration, and "taking the bull by the horns" with the opportunity to institute it in Mexico. He said he was going to try to get across that this whole business should be taken much more seriously. However, he warned that at these Monday morning meetings, staff minds were never as alert as they might be. I guess he was right because I never heard anything back from that.

I wrote a long memo on this subject, including the survey results, and sent it to the other Latin American posts, but I never heard anything back from them. Our Ambassador Hill sent around the embassy a memo calling attention to an article by Roscoe Drummond, New York Herald Tribune, about the efforts of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to develop new ideas toward a world at peace founded on freedom and justice. I

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think I was the only one in the embassy to respond. I cited our work with CEP, the need to broaden an understanding of democratic concepts and human rights. I sent a copy of this memo to Latin America Assistant Director John McKnight in Washington. He fired back a cable ordering me to kill my memo. It would prove “most embarrassing” to the Agency to have the contents disclosed to newspaper columnists. The ambassador turned my memo over with a cover note from a political officer, who later became an ambassador. This political officer wrote, “Frankly, I doubt this is the type of material the Carnegie Endowment is seeking. However, it is innocuous, in my judgment. Let him send it to Mr. Drummond.” The memo was never sent.

The whole business about the CEP development, I had written into the country plan when I first arrived in '57. I had a phase one, the development of the materials, and phase two, trying to move them forward in a different way. So in March of 1960, as we had planned, under the exchange program we brought to Mexico two CEP specialists from Teachers College, Columbia University, Dr. Winfield T. Nibloe and Dr. John W. Polley. The Mexican Academy of Education agreed to sponsor a series of three conferences at which these two professors would explain and discuss CEP in the U.S.

Prior to this, we arranged for them to personally meet with a number of key Mexican educational officials. The conferences went well. They were attended by 65 leading Mexican educators, many concerned with the teaching of civics, and it was about three times the participation of past conferences. When it was over, the Chief of Secondary Education and the Minister of Education asked for 200 copies of our CEP pamphlets for distribution to civics teachers.

As required, Nibloe and Polley wrote a report on these conferences and their conversations to the Chief of the American Specialist Branch of the International Exchange Service. They said that the present situation regarding citizenship education in Mexico would seem to have a significance for all Latin America and that Mexican educators, after 30 years of effort, realized that memorizing civics textbooks have little relationship to

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democratic behavior, and that Teachers College had consistently taken a position that we should assist other countries in the field of democratic citizenship education, and therefore they recommended that a citizenship education center should be located in Latin America, created and funded to pursue this type of work. It would render specific assistance in the form of materials and consultant services and then, based on this, we would get similar centers in other parts of the world. Finally, they said, "If constitutional democracy, as opposed to Communism, is to emerge at the close of this century as the dominant ideology governing the political affairs of mankind, it is imperative that the United States Government take positive and extensive action in assisting the developing countries to educate for democratic citizenship." Well, these were ringing words, but nothing was done.

Before leaving Mexico, which I did in 1960, I had one last CEP experiment. Luz introduced me to a brilliant young Mexican honors graduate from the law school at the University of Mexico School of Law. That's where they were having more trouble with Marxists and Communists than any of the other places. So all I could scrape up was \$300 for a grant. He became fascinated with this idea, and I was fortunate to have a young JOT, Joe Smith, who had a law degree, who was equally fascinated. These two guys spent many hours late at night and on weekends, researching actual Mexican cases to illustrate the points in this pamphlet. The small scholarly text called *The Principles of the Constitution of 1917: Individual Rights and Guarantees* was eventually used as a text at the law school.

Meantime, we had gotten the four pamphlets together and we put them into a textbook called *Senderos de Libertad*, "Pathways of Liberty." To get money for that—I happened to be in charge because Jack McDermott, the PAO, was in Washington in the hospital—I had to cancel a book translation, *The Joy of Music*, in order to do this *Senderos*.

Just before I left Mexico in June 1960, we had a USIA Inspector, Jim Meader, my old friend. When later I read his report in Washington, I was interested to see he had advised the post immediately to drop the CEP experiment. That obviously was taking place.

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The textbook had been printed and it was being used by the National Teachers Training Institute and others. Before the year was out, the book supplies were exhausted. Even though one of the senior people said they could use 15,000 copies of the book each term, they didn't have them. That was it.

*Q: What was the rationale, if any, that Jim Meader gave for recommending the termination of the project?*

WILSON: Not much. Meader, who previously had never been interested in informational-type programs, in his role as inspector, it seemed to me, had suddenly become very interested. Some of this came from his time in Bangkok that we talked about earlier. Now he wanted to push posts to have a multi-media approach to some single topic. He just didn't go for CEP at all. He didn't give any real reason, as I recall.

*Q: I have two comments about that. I find this very interesting for a man who was a college president and whose whole bent up to that point had apparently been cultural. I would think that he would consider this a part of a very active cultural program. The other comment I have is that unfortunately, apparently this coincided with the time when the Agency was devoted to single themes, and this multi-media approach was all the rage back in Washington. I suppose that was part of the reason that motivated his recommendation for his termination.*

WILSON: Right. In any event, the project slowly was fading away in Mexico for want of financial sustenance and policy guidance.

Just one last point on that. I was in Washington following Mexico, as a student at the National War College. I got a call from John McKnight, still Director for Latin America. He showed me a letter he had from McDermott. Jack, I had earlier noticed, had a paranoia, because when I was Acting PAO down there several times at intervals for months and months over several years, when he was in the hospital in Washington, he would write a

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very accusatory letter, things that, good God, I hadn't even thought of doing. However, this particular letter was accusing me of sabotaging the book translations program. Very stiff language, absolutely untrue!

I was so indignant, I told McKnight that if he thought that I was going to sit there and take that kind of stuff, he was seriously mistaken, and I was willing to go to the mat! I took time off from my studies at the War College and went back through the budgets, assembled some stuff I gave to McKnight. I said, "Now, what are you going to do about this?" He didn't do anything about it, and therefore that matter died. Sometimes you have to fight for your rights.

Just one quick thing. As at other posts, I painted when I could find time. I had my first one-man show in Mexico City at the Binational Center. They were about to celebrate the Mexican independence anniversary, 1810-1860. A fellow named Bernard Davis came down to sit on a board with me. A stamp had been designed by the U.S. to be issued jointly with Mexico in honor of this anniversary. Davis was a philatelist, very wealthy. He had founded a Museum of Modern Art in Miami. To make a long story short, he saw some of my paintings and offered me to have a one-man show in Miami at his museum. It was on the 15th of September, Mexican independence day, opened by the Mexican ambassador, part of this important celebration. I couldn't get down to it because I was still up there, a student in the National War College.

### National War College Student

In August of 1960, I entered the National War College as a student, one of 125 from the military and other government agencies. One of the other people from the Agency was Art Hummel, who later became ambassador to Burma, Ethiopia, Pakistan, and the People's Republic of China. At the time, ideology was in the air. President Eisenhower was at the last part of his term. The campaign was on. Life magazine was running a series of essays by outstanding Americans seeking to identify our national purpose.

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The first month I was at the War College, I got a draft USIA plan from a senior policy officer. Normally, the Agency planned about a year ahead, or maybe a loose five-year projection. But this paper was looking ahead 16 years to the celebration of America's Bicentennial in 1976, and they wanted my comments. They had a lot of proposals that would get into the idea of our democratic beliefs. They wanted to start a magazine in six languages called Problems of Diplomacy, which was something I had recommended for a long time.

I used my reply as a device to try to get the Agency focused, not 16 years from then, but soon on this whole field of promotion of democratic principles. I cited a new study that had just come out called "Ideology in Foreign Affairs," prepared by the Center for International Affairs at Harvard for the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, which was saying basically the same thing. Then Human Rights Day was December 10th through 17th. I thought that could be a hook, if the Agency could get President Eisenhower to urge a rededication to the full achievement of the objectives in our own Bill of Rights, as well as those in support of the U.N. objectives. But it was too late, because within a few weeks we were going to have a new President.

So in January 1961, President Kennedy came in with a blaze, made his stirring inaugural address, and I was quite pleased. Ed Murrow was made USIA director. He came over and had lunch with we three students from USIA. He wanted our reaction to the idea of the Peace Corps. There was no time to go into any of my proposals with him there. But the thing that I noted was that Murrow had unusual direct access to President Kennedy. Plus, Ted Sorensen was one of President Kennedy's closest advisors, and his brother, Tom, had been appointed Deputy USIA Director for Policy and Plans. Operationally, he was the most powerful man in the Agency and I knew him, and I thought he liked me. So I thought maybe here was a chance to go through Tom and through Tom's brother to the President, or at least to some of the upper echelons.

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So I wrote a memo to Tom Sorensen. I quoted C.L. Sulzberger of The New York Times, who, in writing about President Kennedy, said he was trying to reach out abroad, and that we had to explain the meaning of our political system and intentions of our global role, and so on. I haven't got the time to go into all that, but it was supportive. I simply said to Tom that I was convinced that the Agency had to make a greater effort than in the past in the difficult and controversial area of communicating basic concepts of democratic ideology. Nothing in the Agency's basic mission statement prohibited more emphasis on this. I pointed out that all of our posts were very much involved with developing unattributed anti-Communist material. Why couldn't we use some of this indigenous effort related to developing democratic ideology? It was a fundamental problem the Agency needed to face.

Six weeks later, I got a reply. Tom said he was glad to see I was continuing the work I had begun earlier, his office was also wrestling with the problem. But he doubted that a unified democratic ideology was possible. In other words, it was a mush answer. I knew I'd struck out again. He really wasn't addressing the questions I was asking.

I sat down and tried to analyze what the hell was going on. I naturally knew this wasn't a panacea for the problems of the world. I was convinced that if the Agency really began a coherent approach, that it could make an important contribution over the decades ahead in building democracy and countering the spread of Communism and dictatorship. When I thought about the various officers I had talked with, well-educated, fine people, many of them would have a simple knee-jerk antagonism to any new idea. Or out in the field there was a basic bureaucratic problem of continuing long-range programs. Often a new PAO's first act was canceling projects begun by his predecessor.

As far as the CEP, many officers either didn't understand what I was talking about or didn't want to take the time. Many thought it was too dangerous for USIS to get involved in the ideological affairs of other nations. Others recognized our support for authoritarian



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regimes, but anything of this nature would undermine that support. So there were many reasons for being against it.

### NWC Research Paper

At the War College, everybody had to write an individual research paper. I decided I would make my paper based on this need. Incidentally, in the spring, after these papers were written, I took the traditional trip and went through the Middle East, where I had not really traveled before. We got quite an in-depth look at that part of the world.

My individual research paper, IRP, as they were called, was entitled "The Ideological Element in our Foreign Policy." I pointed out historically America had three basic attitudes in foreign policy. One was the belief in self-government for all peoples, a feeling of isolation from the affairs of the world, and a sense of destiny in the universality of American appeals. On the other hand, in the actual conduct of foreign affairs, there were two schools of thought. One warned us away from optimistic idealism as being impractical and unrealistic, the other maintained that our principles were our greatest strength and must be closely related to the struggle. Of course, the latter was my view.

Without going into the argumentation of my IRP paper which is on file at the National War College, I said that the ideological elements should include four goals. The first was human dignity; the second, self-government, since human dignity and human rights could not be separated from the idea of rule of the people by the people; the third goal should be economic development and freedom; the fourth, peace with justice, world rule of law.

This paper was selected as one of the ten best prepared by members of the class, and the Commandant sent it with a Letter of Commendation to USIA Director Ed Murrow. A copy was sent to the Secretary of State and the head of all other agencies involved in foreign affairs. But I'm afraid little came of this effort. I graduated in 1961 from the War College, and was assigned as PAO in Hong Kong. I'm going to read just one sentence from that letter to Ed Murrow by the NWC Lieutenant General, Commandant. He said, "The paper

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was judged outstanding from the standpoint of depth of research, logical development of argument, and relevancy of conclusions to the analysis.”

### Hong Kong, Sixth Post

Our consulate general in Hong Kong, our main observation post for viewing Communist China, which was then closed to the outside world, was bigger than 90% of our embassies around the world. The USIS program there was unique in the world. There were three distinct programs. First was called the China Reporting Program, and this was designed to get information about the People's Republic of China for dissemination to the rest of the world; second was the Chinese language program designed to reach overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia; the third was the USIS Hong Kong program conducted along somewhat traditional lines.

Just a word about these different programs. Under the China Reporting Program, we had a publication we developed called Current Scene, which was very scholarly, very factual. It was unattributed, mailed to a selected audience around the world—scholars, journalists, etc. It became a very respected and familiar name in the footnotes and bibliographies of the most serious journals dealing with contemporary Chinese affairs. We began getting Current Scene into translations, French, Spanish, Japanese, and had many outlets in those areas.

At a more popular level, we put together weekly press and graphics on things involving Communist China, and we put out a radio program on tape. Then I got the Agency to contract a New York Times stringer to do a weekly commentary about China for VOA from Hong Kong. We had a newspaper column which we contributed to the wireless file, sent out weekly around the world. We published five to ten original books and a lot of pamphlets dealing with Communist China. So in less than two years after my arrival, we were serving over 100 countries in the China Reporting Service. By the end of 1963, I reported for that year alone, we had put out close to 1 million words about Communist

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China, all original copy, conceived, researched, edited, illustrated, recorded, broadcast, and printed in Hong Kong. My staff got the Agency Meritorious Service Award.

WILSON: I was saying the Agency awarded the China Reporting Program staff a Meritorious Service Award for that. I was one of five USIS officers in the Far East, they told me, selected that year to receive a bonus in-grade promotion.

The next program was the China Language Program to reach the 15 million overseas Chinese scattered in these various nations, and also work in Taiwan. We published a magazine, *World Today*, which was the largest non-Communist Chinese language magazine in the world. One amusing thing about that, previously they always had a Chinese movie actress on the cover. I decided I wanted to put Chinese art on the cover. For one reason, there was a healthy movement in the various Asian countries of creative art, much of it influenced by the United States, and it was diametrically different from the social realistic art of the Communists. My Chinese editors got their friends to corner me and tell me I was making a terrible mistake, because we sold this magazine in many places. But nothing like that happened. The magazine with the art was very successful, circulation expanded. We later had an exhibition of the art covers. However, in 1964, when I left Hong Kong, the very next issue had a Chinese movie star back on the cover. In any event, the Agency killed *World Today* magazine in 1980, in order for Hong Kong to produce an Agency-produced magazine, *Dialogue*.

In the Chinese Language Program, we produced books, but I found that the book translation programs, more often than not, in these different countries did not have any coherence and reflected the bias of the officer in charge. If he liked poetry or history or whatever, that was his thing. So we concentrated on themes and the development of what I called ~"miniature bookshelves" of about 30 titles each. We had different aspects of American studies, which was becoming popular at that time. We did themes on economics, science, history, literature, etc., and had these books packaged in cardboard

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cartons for presentation. Eventually they went to the libraries of Chinese schools all over Southeast Asia.

In the past I found the negatives or plates for the book program had not been retained. Books wear out quickly, especially paperbacks like these. I also got RPC involved in printing these books and I developed what I came to call my “osmosis” theory. I claimed there were thousands and thousands of letters being mailed from Southeast Asia into China by the overseas Chinese, and that some of this must filter back into China. Aside from that, I said if and when we ever regained contact with Communist China, that the existence of these books that had been carefully translated into Chinese would be invaluable to us because you don't translate Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* overnight. As a matter of fact, that did come about when we eventually went back.

The Voice of America was the main contact with the mainland Chinese, and I thought, “That's very interesting. Here we are collecting data about Communist China by experts all over the place and disseminating it to the rest of the world, but we're not saying anything back to the Chinese themselves.” VOA said, well, that was very tricky because they needed cross-references and so on. I said, “Why not do as we do, stick with the facts, admit material as based on expert opinion, like crop production figures for the year.” Well, they tried it for a while, but eventually backed off from doing that.

We organized a VOA Program Review Panel made up of refugees who had recently left the mainland, and we let them listen to tapes of VOA and to make comments. These comments were not always complimentary. I don't think they were very popular back in Washington.

*Q: You mean within Hong Kong, you were playing back tapes of VOA broadcasts then going into China, and having the refugees coming in to Hong Kong out of mainland China listen to them and comment.*

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### CEP/Korea

WILSON: That's right. Obviously, in Hong Kong there was no place for me to use CEP type of material, but I followed with fascination what was happening in Korea, where there was a very careful development of an adaptation of this program. In 1961, General Park Chun He had seized power in a military coup. Here was a country where we had devoted a lot of blood and treasure, and the main paramount objective of our mission in Korea was the development of democracy. The USIS program there was the largest in Asia, and I kept in touch with what was happening. It was fascinating. I'll just sketch it quickly here.

*Q: Who was the PAO in Korea at that time?*

WILSON: I'm trying to remember. I can't remember off the top of my head, because the person who was mainly responsible for developing this program there, this adaptation, was Bernard Lavin, who now lives in Hawaii. When I saw him there last February, he promised me that he would write the details, because he spent a total of 12 years there, speaks fluent Korean, and knows the people very well.

*Q: I don't think he was PAO at that time.*

WILSON: No, he was not PAO.

*Q: He later went back as PAO.*

WILSON: Yes. They assembled a number of Korean intellectuals at a temple and discussed what were the main points they would like to try to communicate in the development of a democracy. They came up with five concepts: the dignity and worth of the individual; taking responsibility; cooperation and community service; respect for the law; choosing good leaders. Then they next wanted to see how they could develop the background to go with this. They had some luck, because they went over to the Central Education Research Institute, which was the research arm of the Ministry of

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Education, and found a man, Dr. Paik, who was head of this, had gotten his Ph.D. at Teachers College, Columbia University, and he was very familiar with the American development of the CEP. Also, they got the Director of the Korean Federation of Education Associations, which had a membership of 100,000 Korean teachers. Those were the ones who sponsored this seminar that I mentioned to come up with those concepts. From that, then, they were going to develop a teacher's manual. After a period of time, the teacher's manual was developed. This sounds very much like Mexico, doesn't it?

All was going well with the slow but sure development of this thing, when in March 1963, Chairman Park dropped a bombshell. To the dismay of the U.S. Government, he proposed substituting a referendum, rather than elections, for a four-year extension of his military government. What is not generally known, William Bundy, in an article dated October 1975, in *Foreign Affairs*, wrote that President Kennedy took immediate and decisive action. He told Chairman Park that if he failed to go through with the elections, the United States would seriously consider cutting off all of its support for Korea. Bundy said this was the only case he knew where this kind of ultimate threat was used to the full. And it worked. For nearly a decade, Korea did enjoy essentially a democratic system.

USIS did a lot of work which I'm sure can be found in other reports.

*Q: You are discussing this program. You were in Hong Kong at that time, weren't you?*

WILSON: Yes.

*Q: But you were in contact with Lavin and the people in Korea?*

WILSON: That's right.

*Q: Helping to mastermind it from your end in Hong Kong.*

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WILSON: I'm a bit of an eminence gris; I maintain contact with several people around the world.

*Q: Because suddenly we're talking about Korea, and as part of your Hong Kong operation, I wanted to make it clear on the tape that you were doing this in cooperation with Lavin, but from a distance.*

WILSON: The nice thing, too, was my responsibility in Hong Kong for the China Reporting Program about Communist China enabled me to travel all over the Far East on that basis. Nothing stopped me from examining programs going on and to talk with different people.

As I say, I won't detail the whole thing, but finally, in the summer of 1963, Korea had another conference. The Korean government had gotten behind this thing, in general. I had a note that the entire seminar cost the U.S. Government \$2,245 to get to that point. Dr. Paik, head of their Educational Research Institute, said that "no more significant project for Korean education had ever come from his institution than the Citizenship Education Project adaptation."

In January 1964, in Baguio, a Far East Public Affairs Conference was held. It was clear to me when I looked at the agenda that, what to me was very significant development in Korea, was going to be totally overlooked. So I did a little work in the corridors. By this time, Bill Phipps was the PAO in Korea. He was an old friend of mine. I proposed that he be asked to develop a detailed report on how this program had been brought about in Korea so it could be looked at in other posts for possible adaptation. In May, the Agency sent Bill's report out, and simply noted that the program had been started in Korea at a seemingly inauspicious time when a military government was in power, and the inference was that similar programs might be started even under authoritarian governments. It was a kind of do-it-yourself kit, I thought, and I wondered if any other posts would give it a try. None did.

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I want to just mention Vietnam for a moment, because I was in Hong Kong from 1961 to 1964 and, of course, watching and visiting down there periodically. A number of my military friends from the War College were serving down there. I came to a couple of conclusions. We had evolved the counterinsurgency doctrine under President Kennedy, this thing that they had us all going through, and that was in opposition to Eisenhower's massive retaliation, when he talked about the atomic bomb.

Now, down there, it seemed to me our special forces, other than using conventional weapons, rifles, etc., even occasionally employing a bow and arrow or knife or sharpened bamboo sticks or even killing with the bare hands, quite a come-down from the nuclear bomb. Then I noticed in the past our aid programs had been directed toward major economic projects—dams, highways, steel mills. Now civic action was the watchword. We were trying to influence the whole populace with good works, corrugated tin roofs, village wells, pills, blankets, you name it. Rather than defining a small part of the population as a target, they were now talking about “the people.”

In Saigon all information efforts were combined under Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office, JUSPAO.

*Q: What period are you speaking about now?*

WILSON: This is in the early Sixties, 1961-1964. So JUSPAO was in charge of the entire information program of the Vietnamese government, and it was growing by leaps and bounds. Tom Sorensen, with his direct White House connections, was the most important man in the Agency. There was a lot of attention because of Bobby Kennedy and the support of counterinsurgency programs.

In the spring of 1963, I wrote to Sorensen again, and said that after reading a copy of the JUSPAO country plan for Vietnam, I was struck forcibly that it had nothing to say about a positive ideological element. He wrote back that he was concerned and that he was



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referring my letter to the Agency planning officer, where “in due course it will get the kind of deliberate consideration it deserves.” Well, that officer was John McKnight. (Laughs) He was the planning officer. It took him one year to write me, and he said that he had been diverted in looking at the Agency's five-year projection for the Bureau of the Budget, and that he had to go out and do some recruiting for the Agency at different college campuses, and that when these matters were out of the way, he would get to my proposal. Well, he never did.

A year later, in the spring of 1964, our involvement in Vietnam was deepening and my time in Hong Kong running out. I wrote directly to Barry Zorthian, who was the JUSPAO director. He and I both had been in the Marines together, I knew him, he was a friend. As a matter of fact, before he was appointed, I had applied for that job with Ken Bunch and cited my qualifications, but he said it was something that the White House and State Department and others were involved in and so on. And I'm just as happy, because I think Zorthian was the man for it. Time magazine called Zorthian the third most powerful American in Saigon.

When I had been at the Agency running around, trying to stir up interest in CEP with my shoe boxes, Barry was deputy of VOA, and he was interested at that time. But when I wrote him, he wrote me back, saying, “We're hardly able to keep our heads above water,” but by fall, he said, he hoped to have his manpower problem in hand, and at that time he would try to create some interest in the project. He said that he had to confess the flaws that I mentioned in his country plan were all too apparent. He said, “There is very little of a positive ideological thread,” But he said, “With the personnel shortages, there just wasn't time to approach things systematically.” He thought with thorough preparation, this approach could be very effective. So there's not much could be done there.

Just before leaving Hong Kong, I sent him another letter, and this time I was very specific. I suggested that he get the Agency to detail on temporary duty a USIS officer knowledgeable in the CEP adaptation in Korea, and better yet, they get some of these

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Korean educators to come down and work with Vietnamese educators, and that this ought to move forward very nicely. But nothing ever came of this.

Three years later, when I was sent to Vietnam representing the Far East on the second of these orientation tours, Barry invited us all to dinner, and he kiddingly told me that if I brought any sample pamphlets on ideological material, he wasn't going to let me in the door. (Laughs)

The last bit. There was a memorandum from Dan Moore, who was the new Far East Area Director. Somehow my letter to McKnight got passed to him. I knew Moore. We had worked together in Bangkok. Dan Moore wrote a memo to Carl Rowan, who was the new USIA director. Actually, it was drafted by Bernie Lavin, the guy who was the officer in Korea responsible for CEP. He said that the idea carried out in Korea might very well find application in Vietnam, that it would involve the development of a small, inexpensive manual that could be put in the hands of teachers throughout Vietnam, and that the results might strengthen the fabric of a torn society, and that ideas developed by these teachers might have a flow-over effect in the homes of the Vietnamese people, and that they agreed with Wilson that the idea merited serious consideration for Vietnam and other underdeveloped areas of the world. Nothing came of that one.

I just want to say one humorous anecdote about my time in Hong Kong, where, of course, I was painting. I was painting with Chinese brushes and inks and materials, and at one period I started using Chinese newspapers with all of the Chinese characters as a backdrop. In one of these, I did a drawing of Hong Kong Life—junks, rickshaws, etc.—and in one part of it, had a rather fat nude woman, for some reason. This and others were mounted as scrolls. The Foreign Correspondents' Club hung Hong Kong Life in its main meeting room which was in the Hilton Hotel.

Former Vice President Richard Nixon, who was traveling through the Far East for Pepsi-Cola, but really to gather information and update himself, came to Hong Kong.

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Although ignored by the consulate, we helped him with his press conference over at the Foreign Correspondents' Club, where the new Nixon, incidentally, made a very favorable impression on these rather suspicious newsmen. In making his presentation, he stood in front of my scroll, and I noticed this, so I told my photographer to try to get a shot. He got an excellent photo of Nixon standing there with my little fat nude woman on his right shoulder. (Laughs) I have buried that in a trunk somewhere. I don't even know where it is today.

*Q: You never showed it to Nixon, anyway.*

WILSON: I never showed it to Nixon. I think he might like it today.

Just one comment. In our normal program for Hong Kong, we did work quietly to nurture the growth of a Chinese university there, and we got the first American studies program. Bob Nichols was the cultural officer. We did a lot, really, in helping bring about the Chinese university there.

I had a lot of fun with the junk I got. We put antiques on it. Some called it “the most beautiful junk in Hong Kong.”

We did put the “Let's Learn English” program on the air there with a lot of success, the one we'd started in Mexico.

### Desalinization

Then a thing that really got me, this is probably sort of dumb, but you know, Hong Kong didn't have adequate drinking water or even industrial water. They relied on catchment basins. As the populace grew—and the Hong Kong government always said their problem was people—they simply made more catchments. Eventually, they were going to seal off one of their bays and pump the water out and use that as a catchment. At one point when we were there, this thing came pretty much to a head, because there was a terrible

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shortage of water, a major drought. We got only three hours of water every four days, people lined up for blocks with buckets. It was a bad situation. The U.S. began financing tankers to come in with water, and one of our aircraft carriers had a little desalinization equipment. In desperation, Hong Kong itself was getting tankers full of water.

Meanwhile, Lyndon Johnson, from Texas—the people in Texas can't talk long without mentioning water—had started four desalinization experimental plants in the United States, and nobody knew much about them. So I wrote to a friend and got a lot of information on desalinization, pamphlets, books, papers, some films, and through the Agency they got this stuff from the Department of the Interior. We began putting on special screenings at our little theater for selected audiences of this desalinization stuff, giving it to the editors and so on.

They were thinking of making a deal with the Communists to share water from Communist China, which, of course—they wouldn't need troops—could just cut off that water anytime. So that was what I was thinking of.

We got a lot of favorable editorials, etc., but the man in charge of the budget in Hong Kong was a dour Scot, very conservative, and I don't think he wanted to read any of this stuff. So anyhow, that was just a Quixote type of effort.

Really, Lew, I think that is the end of the Hong Kong period.

Madrid, Seventh Post

I went to Spanish language training after leaving Hong Kong in 1964, the first real full-time language training I'd ever been able to get since I entered Foreign Service 17 years earlier. I really was annoyed, because I had been told to report in to the FSI on a certain date. I broke my neck getting my family and everything back to Washington on that date. And when I presented myself, they said, "Oh, that class has been going on for three weeks." Here I had to jump in, and these were very fast-paced classes, as you know,

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trying to go back three weeks and catch up, as well as and go forward. That one really annoyed me.

I got to Spain in the spring of 1965. Angier Biddle Duke, who had been Chief of Protocol, was made ambassador. Typical of political ambassadors, he wanted to get a number of people on his staff from his old staff, his cronies. One of them he wanted to be Deputy PAO was Dave Waters. I don't want to get entangled in all of this, but I had more personnel problems in Madrid than anywhere in the world before or after. Sometimes I think officers say they'll do anything to go to certain posts—Paris, Madrid, Rome, something like that—and when they get there, they still find the old problems, the work hasn't changed that much, and they become frustrated, they want to do something else.

Anyhow, Dave Waters was basically working for the ambassador, not for me, and here I was overwhelmed with work. I just blew up. I didn't give a damn what happened. I called him in one morning and I said, "Look, goddamn it, first off, two things. You're going to go around and meet every one of our senior local staff, like every other officer does that comes here. Second, I don't care if you've been up 'til 5:00 o'clock in the morning, you're going to get in here on time. Third, you're going to start being my deputy and take some of the work load off of me." Well, Dave, who was a likeable guy, had this thought that a lot of Washingtonians seemed to have about the merry life of the Foreign Service. Now he was finding that it wasn't all that merry. Anyhow, he eventually asked to be relieved. So they let him go back to the protocol job in Washington.

Also in Spain, just two or three incidents I'll try to go over quickly. One was during World War II, the Gestapo had one of these palacios, a big mansion, on the Castellano, the main street. When the U.S. finally recognized Spain in '53, they took over that building as its embassy. Then, as time went by, they built a new embassy right across the street, which had a high block for offices and a low block for the ambassador's residence. Very modern, but the various ambassadors wouldn't live in that place; they rented homes. So as time went by, the old embassy palacio contained a melange of things—AID stuff, or as they

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closed USIS branch posts, junk from that. Then part of the living quarters across the street in the new embassy became our library. It was a mess. Some congressman going through there raised hell and said, "By God, they built that, and the ambassadors are going to live in it." So Duke was forced to live in the new embassy. About the time I went over there, due to budget cuts, they were closing a number of branch posts.

I determined to try to turn that palacio into the best cultural center in Spain. I won't go into it all. I had to get the ambassador to agree to let me keep some of our other offices in his residence, which he finally did.

When De Gaulle pulled France out of NATO and our troops left there, it changed some of the military logistics. Our military in Spain was changing all the time. I managed to get cooperation of the 16th Air Force in Spain to give us furniture and other things so that we could decorate our Casa Americana. We didn't have the budget. I started a small art gallery there. Our library was there, and it was a beautiful place. I got six leading Spanish sculptures to have an exhibit in the garden, the first time, I was told, in Madrid. We got publicity all over the place, newsreels, magazines, etc. So that was something I was proud of. The only trouble was then Congress decided money for new buildings abroad had to come from the sale of surplus buildings and property, and they determined to sell our cultural center. I resisted, fought it, and at least they didn't sell it while I was there. It went on for another year or two after I left. That was something that I thought was kind of fun. Lots of colleagues have gone through things like that, I'm sure. One other thing that was interesting. They had in the embassy a large easel with charts on it to be used in briefing the streams of people that would come through that wanted to know what the American government was doing in Spain. There was a blank cover sheet on this easel to protect the sheets from dust or something. Spanish language teachers at Torrejon air base said they would like a briefing during one of their holidays or whatever. Since they were teachers, this project was handed over to our Cultural Attache to handle, Taylor Peck.

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The day of this briefing, Peck got up, introduced the political officer, who turned the pages and showed the charts about how Franco was an authoritarian figure. Then the economic officer got up and went through his drill. Last was Peck, who was a Latin American specialist, spoke fluent Spanish. He turned back all the sheets, said he wasn't going to use any charts. The top sheet was blank. He noticed some of the teachers got up and went out, then followed by others. What he didn't know was that some of these teachers were Spanish citizens who somehow had been included. It was thought all were American citizens for what was supposed to be a semi-classified briefing. These teachers of Spanish, who generally had very poor comprehension in English, thought they were being insulted, their country, and their government. Everybody knows about Spanish pride. One of the Spanish teachers was a cousin or something of the Foreign Minister. She was the ringleader. They thought these American Embassy officials had said Franco was a dictator, the economy was terrible, poor, and they thought the cultural officer had rendered the final insult by pulling down this blank page and indicating that was Spain, a country with no culture. So they wrote indignant letters to the Foreign Minister and others.

The Foreign Minister turned all the letters over to the man in the foreign office who dealt with American affairs. Soon after that, there was a meeting Franco had, and one of the ministers sort of casually asked across the table, "Whatever happened to that business about the American Embassy being insulting?" Franco picked up his ears. He said, "Thank God somebody stands up for Spain." A cable went off to the Spanish ambassador in Washington. The Spanish Ambassador went to the State Department, got hold of the head of the cultural side of things, demanded an apology and demanded that Peck be declared *persona non grata*.

I went to the ambassador and said, "This is ridiculous. None of this happened. None of this was said. We've got to make a stand." But he wouldn't. As a result, Peck was declared *persona non grata* and left. His wife remained and she was something else, demanding revenge, given to saying four-letter words in a very loud voice at cocktail parties, before

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that kind of thing was recognized as much as it is today. She really was a bit of a problem. Taylor went off to study French and was going to be made Cultural Officer for Vietnam. He decided he didn't like what we were doing there and he quit.

### Lost H-Bombs

One major thing that happened in Spain. Of course, you know there was the crash of a bomber and a refueling plane when four H-bombs were lost. I was called the afternoon of January 17, 1966 by an officer from the Air Force base at Torrejon, who said they had a "broken arrow," code for a plane crash with nuclear weapons. I had a sinking feeling. Right after World War II, when I was still in the Marine Corps, a captain at that time, I flew in the co-pilot seat over Hiroshima. We circled around looking at that devastation. In this particular accident, the planes were lost, and four H-bombs, each had 75 times the power of the Hiroshima bomb.

They told me the Commanding General of the 16th Air Force, whose name was Wilson, was informed of the crash within three minutes. The communications of SAC were phenomenal. I played golf with a deputy out there one day who had a telephone on the golf bag on his cart. The phone rang. He was talking to some general. I thought he was talking back to the control tower. It kept ringing. He would tell the general about our golf game. I learned he was talking to the SAC Headquarters in Omaha.

Anyhow, General Wilson, as soon as he got the flash, got hold of another one of his officers and his public information officer, and they flew off in a small plane to near where the crash was, was Palomires. It was very remote. They had to wind up taking a taxi to get to the site. The senior American military man in Spain was Major General "Moose" Donovan, Chief of the JUSMAAG. He and I were good friends. He had a special rapport with Franco's deputy, General Munoz. So "Moose" immediately went off to see General Munoz. General Wilson, with his aides, arrived on the crash scene. His public information officer, incidentally, was Lieutenant Colonel "Skip" Young. He was a fighter pilot, a bomb



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disposal guy, a very gung-ho guy, but he didn't know from his backside about information. (Laughs) So there we were.

The first thing I did was to run up to tell the ambassador. It was lunchtime. The ambassador told me to go down and get the contingency plan from the military. I went to the military attache's office. Nobody was there except a secretary. We rummaged and rummaged around. She finally came up with this so-called contingency plan. I took it up to the ambassador's office.

*Q: Was this the military attache's office?*

WILSON: Yes, in the same building as the embassy. So I took it up to the ambassador's office. He and I sat together on a couch and looked at this document. We both came rapidly to the conclusion it had absolutely no relevancy whatever to what was happening.

He asked me to call the air base and talk to the man who was in charge there in General Wilson's absence. We were not getting the telegraphic traffic. I called, and the colonel at the other end said, "Well, I'm sorry, you're not going to get it. This is going back from the military to the Pentagon in Omaha, to be distributed."

I said, "Wait a minute. I'm not calling for me; I'm calling for the ambassador. As a matter of fact, I'm sitting at his desk, using his phone." He said, "Tough." Well, that, unfortunately, was the way it was.

It got to be wryly amusing, because Harold Milks, the Associated Press bureau chief, had a stringer down at Palomires, where they had only two telephones, one in a bar and one in a ratty hotel. General Wilson's people found one of these phones, this stringer found the other. He was telling Milks, Milks, would tell me, and I would tell the ambassador what was happening the first day or two down there.

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At the embassy, I was Chairman of something that had a very inelegant name, PAWG, Public Affairs Working Group. We met once a month with representatives from JUSMAAG, the 16th Air Force, the Sixth Fleet, Rota naval base, embassy politico-military officer, and myself, to coordinate.

All of this bomb business, of course, is well known. I'm trying to stick to some of the USIS aspects. Because of this difficulty of getting information, the ambassador got General "Moose" Donovan, who had his own plane, to go with him and me to fly down to the nearby town of Almeria, and from there take a helicopter to go over and talk to General Wilson at the crash site. Of course, lots of troops and military stuff were rapidly building up there. The Spaniards living in the area were frightened. The military was taking a very hard-nosed line with the foreign correspondents. They were barred from the area. Incidentally, I later was able to get one of my officers who was fluent in Spanish and a political officer to tool around the countryside to find out what the people were really thinking, because I thought this was asinine, not dealing with that local situation.

I found General Wilson was responsible for the land search, and Admiral Guest, responsible for the Navy task force that had been assembled. They were hardly speaking to one another. They found three H-bombs on land, believed the last one was in the water. That was a tough one. We went out to Guest's flagship. He showed us maps and the charts. They were beginning with the conventional minesweeping type of operation. The best technology in the world for an underwater search was beginning to be assembled. But Admiral Guest wanted nothing to do with the press. I said, "What on earth? You don't have anything classified out here other than that bomb down there." But it didn't make any difference.

The Communists, of course, were broadcasting anti-American material to the people of Palomares and to Spain. The matter was beginning to pop up in Parliaments around the world. I wrote endless cables and memorandum to the ambassador and joint ones for the State Department and Pentagon, constantly urging a more realistic press policy. It just so

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happened the James Bond movie, "Thunderball," with its underwater search for a nuclear weapon, was a current big hit. A lot of people formed their ideas from watching that movie.

The people were getting worried the bomb somehow, without going off, would poison the waters of the Mediterranean. Our nuclear submarine base at Rota could become an object of extreme interest. I found out that a new tourist hotel was to be inaugurated very close to Palomares. What a lot of people didn't realize was the U.S. had helped in the buildup of tourism to a major industry in Spain. These hotels were part of our assistance. I pointed out this was an excellent opportunity for the ambassador to go down there and get involved, use that as an occasion to help straighten things out. It wasn't my suggestion, but that of one of the foreign correspondents, an American, who suggested the ambassador swim there. It was a stroke of genius. The photo appeared in the front page of papers all over the world, proving the absence of radiation in the waters.

*Q: I remember that.*

WILSON: Duke always said that no matter what he did, this was the only thing he'd ever be remembered for. It wasn't just the ambassador, but Spanish officials, journalists, wives, children, and USIS officers who went swimming. So then they got tiny submersibles hunting for the bomb. On April 7, 1966, 80 days after the crash, one of the little subs, Alvin, located this thing and pulled it up. I suggested—and I guess there were others—that for credibility, we let the press see this bomb before it was shipped back to the States. For the first time, the Pentagon agreed. It was exposed for photographs before being taken away.

I had written back and telephoned many, many times to Bill Weld, who was the European area director. I got the impression that neither he nor the Agency were taking this thing very seriously. Later, USIA Director Leonard Marks had a PAO conference in Paris. He wrote me the H-bomb business could be a topic for the agenda. I wrote back and said I didn't see any point, if the Agency, which said it was responsible for dealing with these type matters, simply let the Pentagon grab the ball and run with it.

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*Q: What was Marks' reaction to that, by the way?*

WILSON: Well, they just didn't do much about it, passed it off at the conference.

One other thing, come to think about that PAO conference. I don't have the date in front of me. It was, let's say, maybe '66, something like that—1965, 1966. John Chancellor, head of VOA, George Stevens, head of motion pictures, were both at this conference. The Agency had been trying to get everybody to work like hell on the Vietnamese War, getting acceptance and understanding, and it was very hard for them to find speakers who were knowledgeable on all aspects. I suggested that four lecture-type movies be made on the strategy and tactics of the Communists, militarily, economically, politically, and so on, balanced with what we and the Vietnamese were trying to do.

George Stevens said, "That's not a picture. That's a thing." John Chancellor got right behind him on that. As a matter of fact, Stevens said, "All you can show about Vietnam are bombs raining down on people." Marks, to give him credit, asked the PAOs to raise their hands, those who were interested. I'd say 90% raised their hands. Later, the Agency made, reluctantly, a short lecture film on Vietnam, dull as dishwater, deliberately, I'm sure. They showed it to a test audience in Berlin, who said it was a dud. They dropped the whole thing. So much for that kind of movie.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

We were transferred to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, next. There was a very nice big colonial house there for the PAO. The ambassador, Jim Bell, was an old friend of ours. The house had terraces going down from a veranda in front of the place. Someone had built kind a wooden deck to watch tennis players. The ambassador told me, as soon as we got there, a jazz group was coming. He wanted us to give them a reception. It would be a means of meeting a lot of local people. I suggested we turn that platform deck into a stage, which we did. Behind it we had big palm trees, rain trees, and shrubs. We got lighting, loudspeakers,

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and it really worked very well. We could seat people in folding chairs along the terraces, and we could have it dark so we could see the stars, and then the lights would come up. Really a nice outdoor theater. We had lots of plays and poetry readings there, one thing and the other.

*Q: You may not remember, but Peg and I were in that house of yours because at New Year's time, 1967-68, we drove from Bangkok to Singapore, and had Julie Abrams, the wife of General Abrams, with us, and we stopped over with you for a couple of days.*

WILSON: My wife and I do a weekly cooking column for the Potomac Gazette here. I write for her these Foreign Service anecdotes. I just so happen to have an anecdote about that very thing you were just mentioning, but I don't use your name or their name.

### Vietnam Visit

Very soon after I arrived in Kuala Lumpur, the Agency asked me to go represent the Far East with an orientation group to Vietnam. They had just started this program for PAO's to spend a couple of weeks in Vietnam, getting indoctrinations, briefings, and traveling around the country in order to help explain the situation back in their country. Also, maybe help our program in Saigon do a better job with material they were sending out. They had a PAO from Germany, Italy, one from Latin America. Also, Sig Larmon, of the USIS Advisory Board. He was a big shot advertising man in New York. And myself. We got a briefing from Ambassador Bunker, the Commanding General Westmoreland and various other ranking people. Then we split up and went individually to different parts of the country.

One of the conclusions I had at the end was that it's easy to be critical in such a turmoil, but you could certainly say that impatience with the Vietnamese and with little understanding of their language or culture, the American military basically, it seemed to

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me, to be saying, more or less, "Stand aside. We'll do the job." Also, that too much reliance was being put on muscle and hardware.

But be that as it may, I came away proud of the job the United States was doing and trying to do in that war-torn country. From my days in China, I had seen the spread of Communism, the strategy and tactics, and what happened when they won. I also saw that the foreign correspondents, for the most part, seemed to be turning up the rugs to look for dirt, adding fuel to the fire of those against our involvement at home and abroad. Traveling about the country for two weeks, I could honestly say I found morale high among American military and the Vietnamese. The same seemed to be true with the civilian officials of both sides.

There were plenty of problems, of course. The Vietnamese people, if they had their way, would like nothing more than to be left alone by both sides. I couldn't then, nor can I now understand the Jane Fonda crowd, strangely quiet when the Communists later killed and imprisoned millions of innocent people and drove others into the sea, and quiet about the degrading treatment and torture given the American prisoners of war.

So I came back to Kuala Lumpur. The main thing in Kuala Lumpur, I guess, one of the things that intrigued me over the years was distribution of our materials, our products. I noticed in post after post that a lot of attention was paid to producing something, but then when the distribution came about, you'd find some back-room, low-level local, as a rule, who was worrying about the mechanics of it back there. I called it the last ten feet. I had been needling Washington for years to give more attention to this.

### Target Audiences/Ops Room

Aside from that, I also had the feeling we didn't know enough about our target audiences. We talked about mutual interests. What exactly were their interests? Of course, American studies had become something the Agency was very much interested in. So I was trying to look at this. The Agency had three broad objectives for the less developed

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countries: one was understanding the U.S.; two, U.S. foreign policy; three, what they called modernization. I thought the Agency had little trouble with the reporting of our foreign policy. But when it came to understanding the U.S. or modernization, just what part of our vast and complex society was of interest and relevancy to various members of our target audience?

Of course, the main concern in these so-called Third World countries was national development. They needed technical information. But here the Agency had said AID had that responsibility, but it seemed to me we were going to inevitably get into that field one way or the other.

Then the Agency had come up with this thing called PPBS, planning, programming, and budgeting system, which was demanding a basic worldwide list of target groups, and each country was to use this list, adding their special local categories. So in Malaysia—this might be of interest—our target groups were political and government leaders, academic community, communications, media leaders, labor, military and paramilitary, professionals, creative intellectuals, entrepreneurs, businessmen, managers, rural development leaders, and traditional leaders. Then we had more detailed breakdowns under that.

Then another thing began to bother me. When I looked into it, every section of the embassy had its own list of names and contacts, all more or less unrelated to one another. The political section had a responsibility for the biographic list, but those lists broke down often for the simple lack of a typist to keep some of this data. The other lists, outside of USIS, most of them were kept in a shoe box in some office, the military had theirs, the labor attache, agricultural attache, social secretary, economic section, etc. It didn't make sense to me to not have some kind of coordination. Then how to motivate the various sections to cooperate in this central effort?

One thing that had a relation to this, during the 12-year emergency in Malaya, when the British, who were fighting the Communist insurgents there, came increasingly to rely on

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what they called local military operations rooms. These were set up around the country, organized in a certain way, and they fed their data up to a central countrywide ops room. They kept detailed information, including the progress towards goals, and identifying local problems and what was causing the hangups and so on.

When they gained their independence and Malaysia was founded, these operations rooms were turned toward following the same idea in implementing plans for national development. I went to the central one for a briefing. So I decided that what we needed at USIS was our own operations room next to my office, where I could keep an eye on it. It fitted in with the Malaysia ambiance.

I got Harry Britton, an energetic Chinese-speaking information officer, to be responsible for what I called our TAU, target analysis unit. To the mystification, I think, of some, I assigned our senior Malay local, and under him, our senior Chinese local and a local typist, with another typist on contract, to be responsible for this thing. We equipped the place with bookshelves and static displays, all the paraphernalia, typewriters and chairs and all, and we had our small staff meetings there. I called it the "poor man's computer." This was before the computers were much in use.

You are probably familiar with the Royal McBee key sort cards. It's a very old information retrieval system, five-by-eight cards with 131 numbers around the edges, when coded, could be retrieved with a needle-like spindle that would go through these holes. So in setting up that part of it, it cost me \$150 out of my budget. We coded the numbers of the holes around the cards for target groups, geographic areas, languages, fields of interest. I won't go into it either, but we set up, with a good deal of study, and it went back to the Library of Congress listings and so on, fields of interest from A (administration) to Z (zoology).

Our first job, we transferred USIS mailing lists and personal contact cards and all the rest to these cards. As we progressed, I found that my American officer, my Malay and



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Chinese became increasingly enthusiastic, and they went to the different embassy offices, taking what they had and encouraging input. So out of the Malay population of 10 million, we had 3,000 on our target audience list. That began to make an impact as we incorporated this into our planning.

One of the things, the Agency had, was a donated book program. We were receiving books by the thousands. Through this little unit, among other things, we could rapidly identify the book, its subject matter, and people that were interested, because we sent out letters and asked people to check off what they were interested in. We got about a 90% response. It was amazing. We worked more efficiently with the libraries around the country. The air attache loaned us his plane from time to time. Esso tank ships helped take our books to East Malaysia. The Minister of Education began to provide storage space at no cost. Soon we were dealing in the hundreds of thousands. The Agency called our book operation the most outstanding in the Far East or in the world.

Ben Posner—you know him, Lew—was the USIA Assistant Director for Administration, he visited us and later said that, “This system should be definitive in its field, it's impressive, logical, tightly organized, comprehensive.” He said he was going to have his officer in charge of distribution explain it to posts in his visits around the world.

Then the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific came through. He told our ambassador our ops room was the most efficient thing of this sort he'd ever seen in USIS work. So he wrote this praise to Fitzhugh Green, who was USIA Deputy Director for East Asia. Fitz wrote back to him, sending me a copy. I'll read his reply: He said, “The man in charge of our operation in K.L. is Earl Wilson. I'm not surprised. He's probably the greatest idea man that ever headed any organization, plus being a talented and successful painter. So it's not surprising that you saw some fancy operating methods at his post.”

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I did later prepare film strips and other materials for Ben Posner at the Agency, which were incorporated for a while into the training program. I do know that here and there young JOTs became interested. This was sort of at the leading edge as computers were beginning to come in. But the interesting thing is that Joann Lewinsohn, who was assigned to take over from me as PAO, the only woman PAO in East Asia, very rapidly dismantled the whole goddamn thing when she came in. So that's life.

### A Mural

One other thing out there, on the family side. An Indian doctor, Dharmalingen, had the best cancer hospital, the most modern in Southeast Asia. He was a golf partner, companion, and physician for the prime minister. He was a good friend of our ambassador, Jim Bell. The ambassador liked my paintings. He told Dharma. Dharma, as soon as I met him, said, "I want you to paint a mural in my hospital out-patient room."

I said, "Man, I haven't got time to do that. Besides, you should have one of your fine Malaysian artists." Well, he kept after me, and finally Lorane and I, we went over there. This was a beautiful hospital. It was new. These big waiting rooms for out-patients had plain cement walls, very depressing. So I drew life-size animals. The first was an elephant drinking from the water fountain. Lorane would help paint them in. Finally, I even got the ambassador, his wife, Dharma and his wife, who was a doctor, to help paint them in. Dharma was here recently and stayed with us a few days. He told me the mural still exists.

One other thing about our ops room. I found out many people would say the most important thing we did was our exchange of persons program, but when you really looked into this, it was amazing to me how many of these people, once they came back home and resumed their life, were forgotten by us. No contact. So I found that by using our ops room system, if someone were going on a trip, for example, we could furnish them with a little list of the people in that area and make it his business to contact them. In this way we recovered contact with lots of people.

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### Drug Info

Another thing in Malaysia. The drug scene was developing in the U.S. and, as I learned later, in Laos and Bangkok. American kids were getting involved, also in Malaysia. The Agency was not doing anything about this. I found one of my own kids with marijuana, and like the average American, I was shocked. I looked into it. So I wrote to another friend at home and got a whole stack of materials on what was happening in the U.S. I wrote a special report on that which we sent out. I wanted to have it sent out to all the target lists on the health, police, education, etc. My young press officer came over and said, "You can't put this out."

I said, "Like hell I can't. You put it out, and I'm responsible." Well, very soon thereafter, the PAO in Manila and the one in Bangkok somehow heard about it on the grapevine, and they wanted my materials. They put it out. Of course, today in the Agency, that's one of its big, big activities, doing the drug thing.

The moon flight. We had an exhibit in the K.L. museum and it was the best exhibit they'd ever had in that museum. People came from all over the place.

### Photo From the Moon

That does remind me of one thing, Lew. Quickly, I'll go back to it. In Spain there were space stations, one outside of Madrid. When they said, in the Orbiter program, that they were going to get the first photograph of the moon to come into the station out there—it shows you how little we knew about these things—the ambassador and I jumped in a car and ran out there. But all they were getting were dots and dashes that were being sent to the Jet Propulsion Lab in California to be put together. So a bit later, we went out there this time for a briefing in advance. They were going to get the first shot of the earth from the vicinity of the moon, and they wanted to have that photograph distributed in Western Europe by us.

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So we went out there. They said the camera would make strips of negatives, and these strips would be put together and then you print your photograph. The only trouble was, they didn't have a dark room in this very expensive lab. I said, "What the hell? I've got a dark room." So back behind the Casa Americana, in what used to be the stables, we had a little dark room. Arrangements were made. They would, by motorcycle, rush in these negatives with the scientists in the side car, and with my two little Spanish technicians, they would put it all together, we would print it and release it through the Spaniards to the press.

Everybody got so excited that half the NASA staff came, following the motorcycle, and they got there about midnight. They disappeared, the scientists and two kids, into the place. They came out with this wet photograph of that first thrilling shot of the earth with the rim of the moon on one side. That was turned over to the Spanish, and I went home. By now it was dawn. I got a phone call right away. They said, "My God, they made a mistake. They flopped that photograph, printed it in reverse." (Laughs) Well, somehow we managed to get it stopped, and we went back and printed it right, and it went out to the millions of people in Western Europe. That's some of the behind-the-scenes stuff we are always hearing about.

### A Riot in Kuala Lumpur

One other thing I'll tell you, a highlight of our tour in Kuala Lumpur. My wife and I gave a cocktail party because they were having a parliamentary election, and we invited editors and some media people, to try to learn from them more of what was going on. Also there was a USIS TV team down from Korea that could photograph some of this stuff down there. Well, while we were having this party, all of a sudden rioting broke out, because the Chinese Party gained more seats and the Malays lost face. The Malays began attacking the Chinese. This thing spread rapidly. One of the guests, an Indian editor, tried to get to his home. He called us a bit later. His car had been stopped, windows broken. He had been punched in the face, but he somehow got home, though his car was ruined. The

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Koreans managed to get over to their hotel. They were Vietnamese veterans, and they got up on the rooftop to observe what was happening.

Our telephones were working, so in our little dining area I set up a command post. I had our gardener outside. I gave him a walkie-talkie in case anybody came, because the word was getting around that they were going to burn down houses of some of the Americans. This was a wooden house. I had my American secretary, she was assigned to keep a log, I had all the languages and dialects, because I had my senior locals there. I had Malay and Tamil, Chinese, and different dialects. We had the radio on, tuned in to the police radio, and these guys could listen and then telephone to the area where the trouble was going on and pick up information, which then we were putting into a report and periodically called in to the embassy, because the embassy was more or less cut off from its contacts. We had a big map of the city, putting tacks to follow the action. Then the prime minister came on the air, a state of emergency, and I got hold of the Voice of America on my telephone, and I gave them an update on the thing.

When it was over, my wife and some others volunteered to help, including our children. The Chinese refugees had been sent to the stadium in the city, thousands of them. It was a mess. My wife, Lorane, got ringworm from wading around in this mess. Just terrible. She was giving out milk for the babies and different things.

When it was all over, I sent this very careful report on our USIS contribution to our Agency. Dan Oleksiw was the East Asia Director. I didn't even get a "thank you" from him or word one.

*Q: That's normal from Dan.*

Batik Painting/Back to the Agency

WILSON: Yes. It looked important from where we were, but really, that was rather annoying, to say the least.

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I was doing batik painting on the side in Kuala Lumpur, and I got a skin eruption on my hands and feet. As they investigated this, they thought I might have a case of diabetes. So I asked to be relieved to go back home. I went back to Washington, and thank God it turned out to be a borderline case.

While there, I was given a Superior Honor Award by USIA Director Shakespeare. The citation said, "For exceptionally imaginative ideas and concepts over a sustained period which have significantly advanced U.S. Government objectives in the field of public affairs and psychological operations in many parts of the world."

Ambassador Jim Bell had put that in for me. Jim was a very effusive man. I'm going to read for the record a paragraph of what he said in sending in his nomination, because it doesn't pay to be bashful all the time. He said, "In 25 years in the Foreign Service, I've never encountered a USIS officer who had a more imaginative, dynamic approach to the job. I believe he has made a greater contribution to the USIS effort in Asia over the past 20 years than any other single individual in the U.S. Government."

Also while I was in Washington, kind of thrashing around, Mary Painter, editor of the USIA World, the Agency's house organ, wrote a profile on me which was headlined "Idea Man for the Agency."

They decided to send me over to the National War College on the faculty.

### More on CEP Program

Just to go back to CEP for a moment, the Agency finally did put out a message to the field, in which they drew the Korean CEP experiment to the attention of the posts. USIA had suddenly become actively interested in the promotion of democracy, and they wanted PAOs to restudy their programs, their country plans, and see if the building of democracy was adequately reflected. They were given a description of the CEP adaptation in Korea. However, they were warned not to open the Agency ~~"to charges of interfering with

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internal politics of the host country.” This was a step up for the Agency, I thought. It was an airgram, and they particularly wanted to get USIS support in local elections. They included a report from Santo Domingo, showing how that post had helped with a highly successful get-out-and-vote campaign there in June of 1966. All kinds of printed materials and radio spots and everything had been prepared with the unattributed help of USIS, and printed up there in the RPC in Mexico.

Then The New York Times had a story about the Agency. It had a cartoon poster, “Nine Points for the Good Voter,” that had been used in the Dominican Republic, which, three months later, slightly altered, was being used in Vietnam in their election. That was the old idea of adaptation.

Then the airgram included a report on the work of the League of Women Voters in Latin America, asking that the posts work with private American voluntary organizations such as that. Despite this encouragement, however, I was unaware that any posts responded quite like the Korean plan.

The last couple of developments on this whole thing was that Dan Moore, he had been the USIA Director for East Asia, was now a student at the Senior Seminar of the Department of State. He decided to write his individual study paper on the CEP adaptation in Guatemala and Mexico. He asked me for some contacts down there. He did go and talk with them in Mexico. He wrote in his report that, “Certain strategically placed Mexican educators have been positively influenced by the CEP exposition.” However, he said, “There is little identifiable to CEP which remains.” Of course, the post had pretty much dropped that. But it was clear to me that the CEP seeds that had been planted there had continued to flower.

Then I didn't know it, but Dan's next posting after Senior Seminar was PAO Korea. I wrote to him, because I was now over at the National War College, suggesting that since this

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Korean experiment had gone on for almost a decade, they ought to try to measure it in some way, do something to see whether it was working. I never got even a reply to that.

Bernie Lavin, the USIS officer who was responsible, really, for CEP Korean development, went to the Senior Seminar. This is very interesting. For his research paper he decided to visit different major areas of the world, talk to officials, both American and local, about how they felt about the development of democratic concepts in their country, with American help. Before going, he talked in Washington with officials at State, USIA, AID, Peace Corps, Office of Education, National Council for Social Studies, and he sent out questionnaires to the Ministers of Education in each country—El Salvador in Latin America; Bangkok in the Far East; New Delhi in South Asia; and Algeria in Africa, for their approach on civic education.

In Central America, we are currently involved with the problem of Nicaragua, etc. Lavin found the U.S. involvement in Central American education at that time to be massive. For example, in El Salvador, AID was financing the Central American Regional Textbook Development Center, which had developed and printed over 12 million textbooks for public elementary schools throughout Central America. In India, over 600 American textbook titles had been printed. That just gives you an idea.

But despite this myriad of activity, he learned the U.S. had made little or no effort to develop broad civic education programs in or outside of the school systems. And to find out why not, he interviewed numerous American officials. Many said they avoided such because of a “concern for the dangers of cultural imperialism and the sensitivity of officials in developing countries to programs that would influence traditional and cultural value systems.”

Conversely, in his interviews with foreign educators, Bernie found, for the most part, they were not only ready, but they were eager to participate in cooperative programs in which education materials, techniques, ideas, and professional personnel might be exchanged.



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Of course, Bernie's paper recommended the U.S. Government initiate a specific program of civic education in developing countries working within their school systems.

When I saw him, after his graduation, I hoped he would be assigned to the Agency to work on this, but he was assigned to Africa. So much for that.

On the faculty at the National War College, I did do one thing. I was working in the Research Department, editing their magazine and doing a variety of things. I was helping with the research program, and I began to get some ideas about the place. When I talked to the Commandant, Air Force General McPherson, he encouraged me to continue to delve into some of these things which he seemed to favor. So he sent me to visit all the other War Colleges, to see what they were doing in their research programs. I went to the Navy, Air, and Army War Colleges, and I went across the street to ICAF.

I came back with some thoughts. I won't go into all of these, but one was the War College was not supposed to be a staff solving problems for the Pentagon. However, the Secretary of Defense at some point found all this brain power in these colleges, and said, "Why don't they help us with our problems?" So I found the Department of Defense, the way the military will do, had put the word out and the colleges had 1,000 topics for research coming in. I got them to systematically list these things. But, another thing that bothered me, many of these problems were inconsequential, others clearly were things that hordes of people were already studying. It appeared to me that the so-called think tanks that were looking to the future had very little military representation. So I thought students ought to spend more time thinking about problems of the future while they had the luxury of time at the college.

The result was I put all this down on paper. I found the War College really hadn't changed in the decades since I'd been a student. They'd changed some courses, but they hadn't changed much else. To my astonishment, they adopted all my suggested changes; rather radical.

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*Q: They've changed their curriculum quite considerably now, and I know some of it is due to your suggestions.*

WILSON: They asked me to take over the post of Director of Research for the next year. This job was held by a Ph.D. I had no degree. They specifically wanted me to implement the changes I'd recommended. The Agency, in its majesty, however, yanked me to go to CINCPAC and be USIA advisor to CINCPAC. They were quite upset at the War College, because they thought I'd be there for two to three years, at least.

### CINCPAC Assignment

So I went off to CINCPAC headquarters in Hawaii, the largest U.S. unified military command anywhere. Here I was, one USIA person there. I found out that Shakespeare, the USIA Director, had met Admiral McCain, who was CINCPAC, at a meeting somewhere, and they both agreed that USIA should have a broader representation at CINCPAC, which already had a State Department Political Advisor and CIA. Also they had, during the Vietnamese War, a USIA PsyWar, psychological warfare, advisor, but that was down the totem pole.

When I saw Shakespeare before going out, he said he didn't know exactly what I was supposed to do. When I met Admiral McCain, he said he didn't know either, but he would give me his full support. He did give me a nearby office, and he began having me in as one of the three or four people that came to his early morning classified briefings. I had a military equivalent rank of lieutenant general.

The war was going on, but it was winding down in Vietnam, Vietnamization was taking over. When I looked into PsyWar, as such, I saw a couple of things, it seemed to me. One was that when the war started, PsyWar was upgraded, and many military officers thought they would get magic results. But as time went on, with millions of leaflets dropped and so on, they became rather contemptuous of this. They really didn't look at the facts, because

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I think all of the people, by and large, that came over had surrender leaflets concealed somewhere as insurance.

I had to go to the briefings held every week in the CINCPAC theater. I had lunch at the flag mess just down the hall from me, where by happenstance, usually about once a week, I would have lunch with General Lou Wilson of the Marine Corps, a Medal of Honor winner, a very fine man who the next year became Commandant of the Marine Corps. I spent my lunch shooting a pistol on the pistol range while others went jogging or something, and I began visiting around the area.

One advantage was that I knew, obviously, the American PAOs in the field. I knew a number of the ambassadors, and now a number of the generals and admirals, all of which helped. I was able to keep my job somewhat fuzzy, I bounced from one side to the other when I visited these posts.

One thing I began to realize about the military right away was that they were also running, essentially, USIS programs. Not much thought had been given to this. I felt surely we ought to be able to coordinate a little better.

Also, after making my first a trip around the area, I wrote a memo to Admiral McCain. I said there was a real growing problem of the credibility of U.S. military power, and that USIS programs seemed to be doing very little to combat this negative image. Well, McCain agreed. He sent this straight to Frank Shakespeare, the USIA Director, giving it his strong endorsement and offering increased cooperation with USIA. Kent Crane was by now the new USIA Director for East Asia and the Pacific. He had worked at the White House as Agnew's foreign affairs advisor.

This memo of mine, back to the Agency got a few things going. Crane sent me a copy of a memo from Kissinger to Shakespeare, in which he said the Secretary of Defense had

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recommended to the President that the administration increase its efforts to improve our allies' understanding of security policy, and he wanted USIA to prepare an action plan.

In January 1972, I was asked to fly back to Washington and draft a reply to the Kissinger memo, which I did. Then I came back to Hawaii.

Crane said that my paper had stirred up considerable activity in the Agency. The Director of Policy and Plans had agreed on the need to deepen our cooperation with DoD [Department of Defense]. Shakespeare had written to the Secretary of Defense, saying he believed closer liaison at the policy formulation and application levels between USIA and DoD would be mutually useful, they should set up a joint committee.

The Secretary of Defense wrote Shakespeare that he had asked the Chairman of JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] for his views and had designated the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, a State Department officer, to head a committee with reps from JCS and Public Affairs to work with USIA. I then suggested they hold an East Asia Public Affairs Officers' Conference, rather than at Baguio, in Hawaii at CINCPAC with the military.

*Q: Which year was this? One was held in 1970 in Hawaii.*

WILSON: This would have been around '72. I know what you're talking about. That one was PsyWar.

*Q: All the PAOs were invited to attend, and most of them came, including myself. But you're right; that was not a PAO conference.*

WILSON: That was PsyWar, and this one was USIA totally. As I say, they had PsyWar officers at CINCPAC. John McGuire was first, and then Les Squires, and then I was the first USIA Advisor. Crane, who loved the military, was happy to do this.

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I'm going to squeeze some stuff in here quickly. A TV film had come out called "The Selling of the Pentagon." This had created a furor in the U.S., because the whole thrust of the film was that the Pentagon employed numerous people and millions of dollars to persuade the American people to support the policies of the Pentagon, and therefore, it was an internal propaganda and despicable. As a result, inside the Pentagon at that time, there was a great drawing away from USIS, since we were still in the propaganda business, per se, and the PsyWar business. The PsyWar people in the military, as they saw the Vietnamization program drawing down, in looking beyond that, wanted to find an enlarged future role with USIS.

Within that general framework, as we were trying to get this PAO conference going in Hawaii, the public affairs people of CINCPAC would have nothing to do with it whatever. Admiral McCain called up the colonel in charge of CINCPAC public affairs and gave him a direct order to cooperate. Meanwhile, back at the Agency, although Crane was saying, "This is marvelous, great. I'm all for it," and so on, I told him, "The way the military works, they're not going to lift one little finger unless I get something official from the Agency requesting this properly." And for a while there, everybody was going on at the Agency as though they were going to have a conference without anybody in the military doing anything. But finally, we got it straightened out.

The meeting, I can't say produced any tremendous things, but Kent Crane, because of his White House connections, was able to get a number of influential people to come out and talk, and that was interesting. A bit later, he had the next PAO conference in Washington, where we went to White House briefings, to the Capitol, the CIA, and son on. It was a unique one.

One of the things I had pointed out was they were giving away all these U.S. military magazines to various foreign military people, that these magazines were intended mainly for an American military audience. They were often quite critical, one way or the other. So I said, "You know, really you should have your own publication that can control, then go into

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foreign languages, very much like the old RSC thing.” That idea was kicked around, and as a result, out of that conference a rather large overall plan was, in good military fashion, prepared by PsyOps.

About that time, Admiral McCain retired. Richard Nixon, who had been in China, on his way back, stopped for the retirement ceremony. When it was over, the parade and all, McCain and his wife got on the President's plane and disappeared in the sunset. [Noel] Gayler, the new admiral, took over, and in the receiving line, minutes after McCain was gone, said to me, “I've heard a lot of good things about you and USIA. We're going to have a good thing.”

Well, again, to make a long story short, this guy never saw me once. I was mystified. So I began to ask all of the senior officers. His deputy was a general, I knew him quite well. He said, “Well, I can't speak for the man. You have to talk to him.”

I said, “Well, I'm trying to make a courtesy call on him, for God's sake.” Well, he never would, and meanwhile, I was thinking of retiring, anyhow. I put in for retirement.

Cliff Southard, who was the USIA Deputy Director for East Asia, in writing my evaluation report, said: “A civilian, regardless of seniority, operating in the largest U.S. military overseas headquarters in the world does not have an easy row to hoe. The civilian involved in nebulous psychological matters in a headquarters oriented toward more tangible things is doubly handicapped, yet Earl has made his mark, and DoD-USIA relationships have been the benefactor.”

## Cambodia

One last thing happened, however, before retirement. In Cambodia, the State Department wasn't very happy with the way things were going and had asked the embassy there to write a list of recommendations of what should be done. Coby Swank, the ambassador, was an old friend from my Shanghai days. I was asked to go over there with an Army

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officer, a colonel, and another guy to look at and draw up a psychological operations plan for Cambodia. We went over, were whisked around by the Cambodians. It was really heart-rending to see these people and some of the pitiful preparations they had. Also, before I landed, rockets had hit the airport. The white elephant given to Admiral McCain by [Norodom] Sihanouk, was being loaded onto a big aircraft. (Laughs) Then I went out in the jungle where these rockets had come from with these people.

These Cambodian officers took us to an assembly of perhaps 1,000 villagers around a plaza in a village. They had a table with bottles of whiskey and, as I recall, all kinds of fancy food, which we were to eat standing up and drink. They had a military band playing a rock and roll tune, "Going Down the River." I told them I had a belly ache, which I did. But later I thought of all those poor people that were murdered over there after we had to leave.

The report we wrote, I won't go into it, but it was a rather radical report, because the one thing I noticed about PsyOps, time after time after time, the Americans were telling the locals what to do and what to say, and not listening to them whatever. I thought it really ought to be a lot the other way around. There were a lot of different ways of getting at it, which I outlined on the worst typewriter I ever encountered in my life there.

*Q: Are you speaking still about Cambodia?*

WILSON: Cambodia, yes. The Charge, Tom Enders, called us in with his senior military attache, and they just sort of said, "Uh-huh," and that was the end of that recommendation.

When I left, the helicopter was so crowded it was like being on a subway. I was trying to play a game of chess with a tiny pocket chess game, and it was so crowded, you could hardly get it up, and that's because they had so many military officers going in to spend the day there to get around the restriction on the number of American officers that could be in there overnight.

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Just to try to conclude this business. We were going along in CINCPAC, I was, with the idea of focusing on when the Vietnamese War would be over and the nature of the military-USIA relationship of the future. All of a sudden, of course, there was a rude shock when Vietnam suddenly invaded from the north, and that brought back, suddenly, PsyWar operations overnight, more than ever. We had warships off the coast relaying VOA-type broadcasts.

I think the top military, Admiral Gayler, and so on, were confused about what had happened in Vietnam up to this point in PsyOps about leaflets, thinking they were mainly useful for toilet paper or something. I pointed out we were in a quite different situation in the south, in the post we were trying to get people to surrender. Now, in the north, President Nixon had enunciated a peace proposal the Communist authorities didn't want the populace to hear. We were trying to get them to know what the hell was in it. I suggested using drones to deliver leaflets, which they did, and things like that. So anyhow, things were winding down.

### Dress Code

I'll tell you one last funny thing. This goes back a little bit. I wore a bush jacket the whole time I was in CINCPAC, because in Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister and all the people there wore bush jackets all the time, just as in the Philippines they wear the barong tagalog shirts; suits the climate. At CINCPAC, the military officers were in summer uniforms, no neckties, short sleeves, etc. I decided, "If it's good enough for them, it's good enough for me." The POLAD officers did wear a suit and a tie. The CIA guy, sometimes yes, sometimes no.

Phil Habib, when he was made Ambassador to Korea, came through and, as always, CINCPAC gave him a lunch in the flag mess, and I went to it. Habib looked at me and said, "Earl, why can't I dress like that?" Because he had on a coat and a tie.



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I was kidding him. There had been some traffic about a problem of getting him a morning coat in Japan, because he had to have that for his presentation of credentials in Korea. I said, "I have one of those things. I'll give it to you half price. Only used it once for the presentation ceremony in Kuala Lumpur." We were laughing. He said, "The next time I'm coming up here, I'm going to be comfortable."

Sure enough, a few days later he came up there wearing an aloha shirt. Later, when I was in Korea, he saw me at the Marine Corps birthday party. He said, "I want to see you tomorrow." I went over, and he said, "Tell the military to stop all this bull shit." He had been only a week in Korea. He was talking about the PsyOps stuff. I said, "Okay, I'll go back and tell them."

A month or two later when he came to Hawaii, he came to my office and said, "I thought I told you to tell them to stop all that bull shit."

I said, "Wait a minute. You're the ambassador. I'm just an advisor. I advised them and they didn't pay any attention." He laughed, said okay.

Years later, after I had retired, I went back to Hawaii. A lot of my old friends had retired over there. One of them told me that why Gayler, who I honestly think was a limited man—and I've worked with a lot of admirals and generals—refused to see me was he took umbrage that I was wearing a bush jacket. I thought, "Jesus, how small a mind can you get?"

Admiral Vasey was the man in charge of Policy and Plans at CINCPAC. I worked with him more than anybody else. He retired, still is operating an office in Hawaii, where he organizes seminars for leaders all over Asia on different subjects. He wrote a letter to the Agency when I left. I'll read one paragraph. He said, "Earl's contributions to a more effective military-USIA rapport and understanding have been significant and often involved a tortuous path which he always navigated cheerfully and patiently. His imaginative ideas

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not only stirred an old pot which needed stirring, but will pay productive dividends in the future.” That was, in effect, my last evaluation report.

When I went back to the Agency for retirement, I found, naturally, as I hadn't been working there, no gold watch, no party, no words of any kind. I finally filled out all the forms that I hadn't stolen any library books or whatever, and as I was pushing the button to leave the place, the Director of Personnel, Mosley, came running down the hall and asked me to come back to his office, where he, standing up on his side of the desk, gave me, without further comment, a Certificate of Service, and I left the building for the last time.

It had been an interesting life, but I didn't go back to the Agency, I think, maybe once in eight years because until the formation of the Alumni Association, the Agency took absolutely total disinterest in its former officers, despite having said all along that their most important asset were the people. I thought that was a crock.

### Military Magazine

The last thing is a little bit amusing. Last year, I think it was, or year before last, we were back in Hawaii to spend the winter, and I happened to meet the USIA advisor to CINCPAC. On the spur of the moment, I said, “How about giving us a briefing?” I wanted to see what was happening over there. Former VOA Deputy Director Keith Adamson, who lives over there, and I went to CINCPAC, where a woman lieutenant colonel in public affairs gave us an unclassified briefing.

The thing she handed out as background was a CINCPAC magazine, Southeast Asia Defense. Keith, as we were leaving, said, “Hey, look, Earl. Your name is in the foreword.” The magazine was the ten-year anniversary issue, in which it said how successful this magazine had been in reaching key military leaders all over the world. They gave me credit for starting it with another military guy or two. True, I had suggested the magazine, but I had never seen a copy of the damn magazine! (Laughs)

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*Q: I wonder if the Agency ever had.*

WILSON: Oh, I'm sure that our officers probably were responsible. Actually, the young man that followed me to CINCPAC, I believe he did a good job from all reports, a very competent man.

Well, that's my story, Lew. It's a little longer than others, I'm afraid.

*Q: Earl, this, without doubt, is the best interview that we've had or that I have conducted. I think it's comprehensive, and I think it's extremely interesting. If it isn't, I'll be damned surprised. Thank you very much.*

WILSON: Thank you.

NOTE: This is one of the Interviews in the USIA Oral History Project. Project was suggested by Earl J. Wilson and is being implemented by G. Lewis Schmidt. Both are members of the USIA Alumni Association.

End of interview